A

SHORT STORY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SHORT STORY:

INTERSPERSED WITH

POETRY.

BY A YOUNG LADY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY
GEO. CAWTHORN, BRITISH LIBRARY, NO. 132, STRAND, BOOK-
SELLER TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCESS OF WALES;
SOLD ALSO BY MESSRS. RICHARDSON, ROYAL-
EXCHANGE; H. D. SYMONDS, J. WALLIS, WEST
AND HUGHES, PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND
J. WRIGHT, PICCADILLY.

1800.

BRITISH MUSEUM

PREFACE.

THOSE who chance to open these volumes must not expect to be entertained by variety of character, surprising incident, or brilliant description.

It is the intention of the following pages to pourtray some of the emotions of Love, as they arise in a virtuous heart and strong imagination. Probably it may be objected, that 'such delineations tend to fill the female mind with romantic fancies:' but surely it cannot prejudice the cause of morality, to describe the charms of genuine and reciprocal

tenderness; particularly in this sophisticated age, when an augmentation of wealth is the chief incentive to marriage—when affections are perpetually sacrificed to ambition—and the heart remains cold and desolate, or seeks for animation amid the haunts of dissipation, and becomes vicious.

The writer of the 'SHORT STORY' wishes it were more interesting: but she flatters herself, however, that her motive for publishing it may soften the frown of disapprobation, (should criticism condescend to notice such a trifle), for it was her principal desire to enforce the duty of resignation under affliction:—and

she would feel sweetly recompensed for her trouble, if she could know that even *one* poor unfortunate being had perused the following pages; then mentally exclaimed—' Yes! I will live, and reserve myself for better fate!'

A

SHORT STORY.

CHAP. I.

'La douceur et la grace se peignoient dans tous ses traits. Sa beauté dont l'éclat frappoit d'abord, sembloit ensuite emprunter ses charmes de son esprit de sa bonté: en la regardant on l'admiroit; dès qu'elle vous jettoit un coup d'oeil on l'aimoit sans songer qu'elle etoit belle.'

'WHAT a charming evening!—Never did the landscape appear more beautiful! I will walk to the declivity in the park that fronts our ancient mansion, and observe the setting-sun reflected on the ocean, and gilding the chalky summits of the distant hills, whose feet are half obscured by the blue tint of air. O! that I could de-

lineate the varying lights, the flitting shadows, the evanescent charms of the soft perspective! — But what pencil can do justice to the beautiful and sublime of Nature?'

Such was the soliloquy of Laura, as she reclined, with her port-folio by her side, on a rustic bench beneath a spreading chesnut-tree. Her large straw hat was thrown off, and the evening breezes blew aside her auburn hair, and discovered as fair a face as ever raised the sigh of Envy. Her eyes—— but wherefore should I attempt to describe that undefinable something called *expression?* wherefore endeavour to pourtray a countenance that captivated, not so much by the common exteriors of beauty, as by the irradiations of all that is amiable in virtue, refined in taste,

and exalted in mind? When she gazed around on the charms of Nature, or listened to the recital of glorious deeds, she was Genius personified. When she associated with the young and gay, she could smile like Hebe, but oftener did she seek the abode of poverty and sorrow, and weep like the Angel of Pity. Many were more admired than Laura, but none was more beloved. Though her beauty and talents were sufficient to have raised the enmity of half the world, her uncommon merit was pardoned, because her temper was so sweet that she never wounded the feelings of self-love, but rather sought to discover some amiable quality, some latent charm, in all with whom she conversed; and when successful in the research, her looks and gestures evinced how well she knew how to ap-

preciate those sudden effusions, those refined graces of soul, which so often pass away in society unheeded, or unapplauded. Often did she veil her own abilities, that she might not betray the ignorance of others. Common observers declared that she was a beautiful, obliging girl; but it was only her intimate acquaintance who could discover the depth of her understanding and the brilliancy of her fancy. At the age of fourteen she had the misfortune to lose the most sensible and indulgent of mothers; and she was then left to seek instruction and amusement just where inclination guided; for her father (Sir Robert Mapleton) was perfectly unequal to the task of expanding her dawning faculties. He was by turns a politician, a fox hunter, a *bon-vivant*, and a gambler: and, with-

out being naturally ill-disposed, was perpetually led into error, owing to the extreme indolence of his character, which induced him to adopt, without reflection, the sentiments and habits of his companions; and to gratify every inclination, without troubling himself to consider whether such gratification would ultimately tend to his advantage or prejudice. He seldom saw his daughter, excepting at the hours of breakfast and dinner, when he was often embarrassed by her questions, on subjects of which he was totally ignorant, and would check her desire of information, by observing, that 'knowledge was quite useless in a woman'— Notwithstanding these disadvantages, her mind became every day more cultivated. Thoroughly acquainted with

the French and Italian languages, she read their celebrated authors with the enthusiasm of Genius; dwelt with avidity on the page of history, and culled the undecaying leaves of moral philosophy, together with the blooming flowers of poetry. She thought and acted agreeably to her own judgment, and the impulse of the moment; for she had no one to imitate. She knew not guile, nor suspected it in others; and her character, formed in solitude, bore all those tender and delicate impressions of unsophisticated nature, which are too soon worn off by an intercourse with the world.

While I have been giving this prolix, tho' inadequate, description of Laura's charms, the dews of night have warned

her to quit the park. She has finished an outline of the opposite scenery, has carelessly tied on her straw hat, and, with light heart and smiling countenance, is hastening homeward.

CHAP. II.

———— 'And with that idle talk
Which passes o'er the mind, and is forgot,
We wore away the hour.'

ON entering the drawing room, she perceived that her father was still sleeping on the sofa where she had left him, and that her cousin, Louisa Dornford, a fashionable belle, was languishing over a game of piquet with the handsome Colonel Somerville; who, on observing Laura, immediately exclaimed, 'Whither hast thou been wandering, pretty shepherdess? Hast thou been tending thy flocks in some sequestered grove? "Oh tell me at eve

where they feed" for I have a vehement inclination to enact the " Gentle Shepherd," that I may be allowed to sentimentalize with you in your frequent rambles; but seriously speaking, it was very cruel of you to leave me thus tete-a-tete with Miss Dornford; for, as she knows how much I am your devoted humble servant, she would not allow me to say civil things to her; and as love is the only subject on which I wish to discourse with a young lady, I proposed cards, to avoid the repetition of dreary monosyllables, and eternal exclamations on the fineness of the weather.'

'I thought my cousin was going to write letters, or I should have invited her to accompany me,' replied Laura; 'but really I think you need not have

been destitute of amusement, when so many charming publications are dispersed about the room.'

'He *did* try to entertain me,' drawled out Louisa, 'for he bored me to death by reading some of Pratt's Gleanings: he then took up Mrs. Robinson's last novel, which I soon snatched from his hand, and we began to have a game of romps; but the disagreeable dog barked at us, and as we were afraid that Sir Robert would scold us if he awoke, we sat down to play at piquet.'

'Thus, you may perceive, my dear Miss Mapleton,' interrupted the Colonel, 'that by this short specimen I am perfectly competent to judge of the delights of a matrimonial duet, during a long winter evening. How delectable

to sit half entranced opposite the lovely partner of one's ennui; and by gentle nods to testify approbation of her continued silence! or sometimes to fix one's eyes on her pretty doll like countenance, and "gaze on vacancy" by the hour together! for how few women are there who, like you, would be so unkind as to torment a man with ingenious questions and brilliant sallies; and who would absolutely oblige him to the fatigue of attention, by an appeal to his imagination, and to his reasoning faculties.'

Laura, who was little gratified by a compliment made at the expence of her whole sex, and piqued at his want of politeness to her cousin, retorted with some quickness, 'You are unjust to ridicule the consequences of that

superficial education which I have often heard you approve! you think that women should sacrifice largely at the baseless and glittering altar of the Graces; but that it is reserved for the lords of the creation only to pay homage in the Temple of Reason.'

'Pardon me, fair priestess!' replied the Colonel with a provoking smile, 'enter there freely; pour incense on the shrine of thy divinity: with the breath of beauty kindle the dark embers of politics and metaphysics!—What matter if the subtile spirit of love evaporate in the flame? Methinks I behold this illustrious assembly!—Every lady would think herself entitled to a seat, though she could not send her footman to keep it. What confusion!—what noise!—what scram-

bling for places!—and how would Miss Seward, Charlotte Smith, and Mrs. Radcliffe, be ever able to settle the point of precedence? What an august confluence of historians, legislators, and philosophers in petticoats!—and you, Laura,—who will justly claim one of the "highest seats in the synagogue,"—you must compose a sublime ode "on the natural equality of man and woman;" a physical impossibility; nevertheless, it is an assumption which may be allowed to pass by poetic licence.'

'I did not imagine,' said Laura, 'that my observation would have afforded a theme for so much raillery: and far am I from wishing that my sex should encroach on the prerogatives of yours. In every conversation

on this subject, I have only expressed my opinion, that a girl should be so educated, as to become an agreeable and rational companion, and learn to seek for happiness in the exercise of her duties: that when she can no longer shine in society, she still may bless in solitude: or should she lose the object of connubial affection, and be destined to a lonely pilgrimage through life, that she may possess sufficient strength of mind to endure so great a calamity with fortitude; and honour the memory of her beloved, by rearing up his offspring with maternal vigilance and tenderness, in the paths of virtue and wisdom.' 'But after this long discussion,' continued, she 'I must inform you, Colonel Somerville, that you have lost a great pleasure by not requesting my dear Louisa to exert

her musical talents; for though she is not fond of reading, I assure you she plays very finely on the piano-forte.'

'I see, cousin,' cried Louisa, 'that you wish to make apologies for my ignorance: but I should hate to be pedantic; and I know that the men like one the better for not being very sensible.'

With this reflection, so consolatory to many a pretty simpleton, the whole party descended to the supper-room.

CHAP. III.

Soyez spirituale; plaisant, profond, sublime,
Je veux qu'on vous admires, non qu'on vous estime:
Mon suffrage en un mot n'est dû qu'à la vertu;
Sans vertu, tout esprit est mal-fait et tortu.

RETIRED to her own apartment, Laura did not feel disposed to sleep; but opening her window, surrounded by jessamine that flung its rich odour on the breezes of night, she fell into a deep meditation. 'What,' thought she, 'am I to conclude from the ambiguous attentions of Colonel Somerville? Already he takes on himself the tone of an approved lover! and does not my father seem to consider him as already one of the family? And yet

he has never spoken to me on the subject of love; nor is he one of those who know how to make themselves understood *without* speaking. His bold glances and hyperbolical compliments only tend to disgust me; yet certainly this man imagines it is impossible I can refuse his handsome person and immense fortune, whenever he condescends to offer them. Till that time shall arrive, he may cherish his mistake; since he affects not to notice the determined coldness of my manner, and every other token of my indifference, nay, almost aversion. It is true that he is perfectly handsome, rich, learned, elegant; and I cannot *describe* why I so much dislike him: but when he approaches, when he takes my hand, my very soul seems to contract: he ridicules all the emotions that had be-

fore expanded it; all that had made me feel so calm, so contented; so pleased with myself, and with others. Never shall I forget the day when he called me 'the Lady Bountiful of the parish;' and asked me 'how many old women I had killed?' Then to hear him incessantly retailing the gloomy maxims of Rochefoucault and enclosing all actions grand and amiable within the narrow circle of self-interest! to inculcate such an opinion must surely be prejudicial to society, by rendering the heart cold and suspicious; and by taking away that self-estimation, which lends a charm to the exercise of morality; and nourishes every kind and benevolent propensity. Oh! I have seen him smile at the recital of the most atrocious deeds; and then exclaim with something like ex-

ultation, 'Does not all this betray the original wickedness of mankind? Yes! we are fast verging towards a state of nature; preying on each other, and obeying every furious impulse of unrestrained volition: and yet some fools pretend to believe in the native beauty of virtue; just as if it were not merely a matter of convention.' I remember, that at the conclusion of this sentence, I cast a shuddering look at his gloomy, perturbed countenance, and mentally exclaimed, 'Mistaken mortal! why thus employ thy brilliant faculties to thy own discomfiture? And why thus pour into the ear of youth the poisonous distillations of arrogant misanthropy? Rather would I become the wife of some virtuous peasant, than be united to a man who can boast of such opinions.' Perhaps this decision of a

moment may influence every hour of my future existence; for I foresee that my father will exert all his authority to accomplish our projected union. Oh! had he had chosen for me one who was worthy of my love, gladly would I have complied with his wishes: for now I feel alone in the world! No one understands the language of my heart! and when it sighs for a resting-place, it is driven back by the reserve of my father, and the jealousy of my cousin. I know not the charms of mutual confidence; never have I tasted the sweets of sympathy: those sweets which bloom in every soil, and which, decorating the bosom of innocence, come over the soul

——— 'Like the soft south,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour!'

Oh that I could be united to the idol of my imagination!—he who should form my character by his own;—he who should strew flowers over the paths of science, that we might walk in them together! Methinks all the virtues must flourish beneath those vivifying beams that dart from the eyes of affection:—yes! I feel that love alone can call into action the latent energies of my soul!'

Laura was now ruminating on a subject which probably would have engaged her thoughts much longer, had she not observed that the air from the window had almost extinguished her taper; and therefore she hastened to transcribe a weak and imperfect translation that she had lately made from the French of Florian; and it was pro-

bably the tenderness of that author which raised in her mind a peculiar sense of her own loneliness, contrasted with the images of pure affection and genuine felicity, pourtrayed in the pastoral of Galatea. It was from the opening of the second book that she versified the following

WISH:

Oh that it were my fate to dwell
In some romantic lonely spot,
Where cherry-trees might half obscure
My rustic cot!

Where a small garden, and a mead,
With fruits and flowers might abound;
And hives for the industrious bee
Be rang'd around.

And where to limit my domain,
An hazle-border'd stream might glide:
There should my wishes all be fix'd,
Nor cross the tide.

With what delight I'd pass my hours
These calm sequester'd groves among;
And I should never, never feel
The day too long.

What tho' no spacious grand estate,
Though riches fall not to my share,
I have enough for all my wants,
And some to spare.

(To those who cannot aught bestow,
The sweetest pleasures are unknown,
They're poor indeed who only claim
Enough for one!)

Ah! could I all my blessings share
With some kind, virtuous, tender friend;
And in a soft, a sacred tie
'Our beings blend:'

And see our children sport around
With rosy smiles and noisy glee,
If *such* my fate'—methinks ev'n kings
Might envy me!

CHAP. IV.

'And *he* too loves for the first time. Can we wonder if the first beams of the morning's blush should seek and find each other?'

WHAT is more tiresome than a small party, composed of characters totally dissimilar, immured together in a country-house, and obliged, from a principle of politeness, to consult each other on every plan of occupation and amusement? Days of lassitude and constraint had already wearied the inmates of Woodleigh Park; yet, as Louisa had no one to accompany her to a watering place, nor the Colonel any fashionable belles to admire him in Bond-Street, they did not talk of se-

parating: and though the latter was mortified by the indifference of Laura, he liked to look at her, and to win large sums of her father's money at hazard and billiards. But it was poor Louisa who was in the most pitiable situation;

——— 'She roll'd her lovely eyes in spite,
Looking delightfully with all her might:'

She smiled, sighed, dressed at the Colonel, alas! in vain. Not that she *loved* him—No! she would have been indignant at the accusation of such a romantic folly: but this said Colonel had just resigned his commission, on coming into possession of an immense fortune, and was what the Misses call 'a great catch:' besides, 'what a charming thing it would be to rival her sensible cousin!'

Such was the state of affairs at Woodleigh, when, one evening, as the ladies were walking in the park, Louisa suddenly exclaimed, 'Bless me!—look at that dashing young man who is riding down the elm walk; I wonder who it can be!—Isn't my hair all blown to pieces?'

She had scarcely finished speaking when the stranger, alighting from his horse, (which he gave to the care of his servant) approached Laura, and, with a graceful bow, requested to be informed 'if Colonel Somerville was still a visitor at Woodleigh? 'I believe,' added he, 'I have the honour of speaking to Miss Mapleton?' She politely answered his questions; and, to avoid that awkward pause which generally

follows the first sentence of introduction, began some common-place observations; but Louisa, who was not at all inclined to remain unnoticed, engrossed the conversation, and did not suffer the slightest interval of silence till they reached the house. During this time Laura had an opportunity of observing the unknown. He appeared to be about the age of five and twenty: he was not particularly handsome; his countenance was rather pale; but his eyes bore an expression of genius and melancholy that was singularly interesting; and his voice was modulated by sensibility. On entering the hall he requested to be conducted to Colonel Somerville; and they remained some time together in earnest conversation.

'I believe, ladies,' cried the Colonel, as he re-entered the drawing-room, 'that you have never seen my brother Edward; give me leave to introduce him to you.'

'Oh I suppose my cousin has often met him,' replied Louisa, 'for Mr. Somerville accosted her in the park as if they had been old acquaintance.'

'Really,' answered Mr. Somerville, somewhat confused, 'I have received such frequent and faithful descriptions of Miss Mapleton, that it is not surprizing I should recognize her, particularly in her father's park.'

'No!—I see how it is,' cried the Colonel, smiling, 'congenial souls are always attracted towards each other;

'tis a species of magnetism, acting on strong imaginations, pre-disposed to the illusions of love. Indeed, Miss Mapleton, you will soon discover that Edward is your kindred spirit: he is as complete a Philander as ever "penned a Sonnet to his Mistress's eyebrow." He will talk to you by the hour together, on the charms of universal benevolence; or he will discuss the advantages of solitude with all the eloquence of Zimmerman; or make tender speeches in the soft language of Metastasio:—then he paints landscapes as well as Payne; he sings, he plays on the flute, he rhymes:—what a catalogue of accomplishments! and I am sure you will allow he is romantic, when I tell you that he has ridden forty miles this hot day, to bring me a message from one of his friends, who, it

seems, cannot die in peace till I have settled something with him about pounds, shillings, and pence, for the benefit of his disconsolate widow.—Moreover, Edward has very sentimentally attended this friend, during all the perils and dangers of an infectious fever; little to the advantage of the sufferer, and at the hazard of his own life.'

'I am sorry,' answered his brother, 'that you appear so unconcerned for the fate of poor Throsby! and whatever consequences I may experience, I cannot regret that I have fulfilled the duties of friendship. If *your* sentiments were to become general, how greatly would the sufferings of humanity be increased! The chambers of disease would be deserted; and man would be left to perish, unpitied, and

unsuccoured. Nor can I agree with you, that the cares of tenderness are of little avail to the dying. The soft tones, the anxious exploring gaze, the tender smiles of friendship revive the drooping soul:—and who would refuse the trifling consolation of one parting farewell to the poor traveller who is journeying towards an "undiscovered bourne," yet casts "a longing lingering look behind?" Believe me, I bless heaven that it has been in my power to sooth the last moments of a virtuous friend, to whom I am indebted for some of the best pleasures of my existence.'

'This is the strain of old fashioned morality,' said the Colonel, yawning.

'It is the strain of nature and sensibility!' cried Laura: at that instant

her eyes glanced on Edward's countenance, but were suddenly cast down, for she perceived that her exclamation had been *felt*, and a faint blush overspread her cheek.

'*Your* strain, Miss Mapleton, is something like an affetuoso movement,' cried the Colonel, with a sneer.

The blush of Laura was no longer an undefinable suffusion; it was the vivid glow of vexation. Edward remained silent and pensive. Louisa had left the room, to write to Dollman for a new beaver hat: Sir Robert began to talk about Buonaparte, but no one listened to him; and all parties seemed rejoiced when they separated for the night.

CHAP. V.

'No drugs the kindly wish fulfil,
Disease eludes the doctor's skill;
The poison spreads thro' all the frame,
Ferments, and kindles into flame!'

THE next morning, when the family had assembled in the breakfast room, the door was suddenly thrown open, and Edward Somerville's servant rushed into the apartment, screaming and exclaiming, 'My master is dying! my master is dying! he fell down in a fit! Oh! my dear, dear master!'

The general consternation was extreme; but the Colonel seemed the most composed of the party, and said,

'Do'nt frighten yourselves, ladies! I suppose it is only a fit occasioned by excessive fatigue; it was quite madness to ride so far this hot weather: be so obliging as to remain here while I go and make enquiries.' Thus saying, he left the room; but Laura was too anxious to continue there. She traversed the hall, she listened to every noise, and at length ascended the stairs:—she waited there with palpitating heart till some one should bring her intelligence; at length she could not restrain her impatience, but ran along the gallery till she came to Edward's chamber; it was crowded with servants; the door was a jar; she opened it, and beheld the object of her solicitude supported by his brother and servant:—his head was reclined on his shoulder; his eyes were closed; and his

pale countenance appeared still paler by being contrasted with the black coat in which he happened to be dressed. Laura gazed at him with dismay; but had sufficient presence of mind to enquire, 'if a physician had been sent for?' In the confusion this thought had not occurred; but the housekeeper now recollected that the neighbouring apothecary was at that time attending a person in the village. A messenger was instantly dispatched for him, and as Mr. Langley chanced to be returning home through the park, it was but a few minutes before he made his appearance. Laura watched every turn of his countenance, till he pronounced that he thought his patient would soon revive, for that his faintness was occasioned by excessive agitation and fatigue. In fact, soon after some of the most ef-

fectual remedies had been administered, Edward heaved a deep sigh, opened his eyes, and fixed them on Laura, who greeted them with smiles, while the tear of doubt and anxiety still lingered on her cheek. 'Thank you, Miss Mapleton,' said Edward, in a low voice, 'for the interest you so kindly express!—I fear, brother,' continued he, 'that I have given you great trouble; I am still violently ill!'——

Mr. Langley approached, felt his pulse, looked alarmed, and declared that he had every symptom of a malignant fever. 'Alas!' cried Edward, 'how dreadful to bring an infectious disease into this family!'

'And all by your own imprudence!' exclaimed the Colonel, starting back,

with an unfeeling look of mingled reproach and affright.

Edward endeavoured to walk forward, but instantly fell down on a chair beside him. 'For pity's sake,' cried he, 'conduct me from this house!'

'It will be at the peril of his life if you remove him,' said the apothecary.

'My life is of little value,' exclaimed Edward, 'let me not endanger the lives of others!'

'No,' said Mr Langley, 'I cannot in conscience suffer you to leave this room.' Quite exhausted with weakness, and an agonizing pain in his head, Edward made no further opposition; but with a faultering voice be-

sought his brother 'not to forget his friend's request.' Then turning to Laura, 'conjured her to pardon him, and to attend to her own safety!' he would have added more, but his words became incoherent. Mr. Langley desired that every one would quit the chamber, and that a physician might immediately be sent for.

Colonel Somerville used every argument to persuade Sir Robert and his daughter to accompany him to his own house: but the latter positively refused to go, and observed that, as his brother's chamber was in the wing of the mansion, very remote from the rest of the family, they would in all probability escape the contagion. Louisa cried, and desired to be sent home directly. The Colonel ordered

his curricle to the door, and endeavoured to prove that he was doing his duty by deserting his brother. 'No man,' said he, 'has a right to part with an existence that is beneficial to his country. Now I shall serve my country by spending a large fortune in it, and by rearing up future citizens for the state: therefore I ought not to hazard my life for the sake of an individual.' Laura could not forbear smiling at the logical apology he had invented for his selfish conduct. She had not much respect for that soaring virtue, which affects to look down with contempt on the exercise of domestic duties: and she thought that a man ought to love and serve his family and friends, before he ventured to boast of his *amor patriæ*.

CHAP. VI.

'Ah! but to die!—to bid adieu!
An everlasting farewel too!
Farewel to ev'ry joy around!
Oh! the heart sickens at the sound!'

A WEEK had elapsed since the departure of the Colonel and Louisa; but Edward was not yet pronounced out of danger. Never had a week appeared so tedious to Laura. Two or three times a day she questioned the physician concerning the state of his patient, and by her anxious looks endeavoured to cheat him of a favourable answer. She never went to bed till she knew that Edward was tolerably composed: when she awoke in the

morning, it was always a long time before she could assume courage to say, 'Is he still alive?'—She could neither draw, write, nor read; and her only amusement was walking alone in the shrubbery near the house; or on a fine sandy beach, sheltered by romantic cliffs that terminated the park. It was during one of these rambles, and after she had received a tolerably favourable account of Edward, that she composed the following Sonnet:

TO DEATH.

Avaunt! grim spectre of terrific mien!
Nor touch with icy wand, nor dim *his* eyes
Who here on the sad couch of sickness lies!
Ah! cease to hover o'er this tranquil scene;
With all thy doubts, and fears, and agonies!
Go! where to smooth thy path Despair hath been;
Where thou art oft invok'd with tears and sighs;
Or pious age may greet with smile serene!

Go! to the darksome cell where maniacs rave;
To the low cradle where pale infants weep!
They have no joys to rescue from the grave,
They cannot dread thy long mysterious sleep:
But spare the pulse of life! in pity save,
While Youth and Hope enlivening measure keep!

Laura sometimes endeavoured to account to herself for the uncommon interest that she felt in the fate of Edward: 'Oh!' thought she, 'it is dreadful to witness the approaches of death! and no doubt I should experience as much grief and anxiety for any other fellow-creature, whom chance had conducted in similar circumstances, beneath our roof: but how amiable he appeared!—what noble and ingenuous manners!—then to die so young!—No, certainly he will not die!' After the conclusion of this prediction she became more composed; and it was a

prediction she made at least ten times a day.

Hail ye benign propensities of our nature! Ye that teach us to be of such easy faith! Ye that teach us to dwell with fascinated gaze on the illusions of Hope, and to believe her most when most she cheats us: all, all have cause to bless ye: but chief the wretch who, at your bidding, starts back from the precipice of despair.

One morning, when Laura was walking, she observed Edward's servant advancing towards her, with a light step and a chearful aspect: 'Good morrow, Harry!' cried she, 'your countenance promises joyful news.'

'Why, yes, my lady,' answered he, bowing to the ground, 'it would be

a little odd or so if I didn't look pleased and smirking such a morning as this. Why, bless you, Miss, haven't you heard what the Doctor said? The Doctor said,' says he, " I think I may venture to pronounce that my patient is in a state of coalescence." 'What's that, says I?'—'Why, that your master is getting well, you ninny,' says he. 'What does I do, but up I jumps, throws my arms round his neck, and blubbers like a great calf. What a fool a man must be, Miss, to cry because he is happy! Did you never see the Doctor? to be sure he is an ill-favoured lanthorn-jawed gentleman as ever I clapped my eyes on; but just then I thought he had the handsomest face that ever I seed in my born days. Mr. Edward smiled, God bless him! and he said,' says he, " Harry, do not confine yourself to my chamber; go and

take some fresh air; and if you meet Sir Robert and his daughter, tell them that I shall live to thank them for their hospitality and goodness!"

Laura fully participated in Harry's delight, who continued to walk by her side. Joy is naturally loquacious, and she was pleased with the simple effusions of his heart.

'Yes, yes, master will soon be stout and strong: I'll get Coriander into high condition; and come winter, and nice open weather, we'll have rare sport a hunting. It does one's heart good to see Mr. Edward ride! he looks like a prince: then off he darts as quick as an arrow, and distances all the knowing ones. Tally-ho! he is in at the death. Up comes my lord and

bets him a hundred for his nag. "I'll double it," says t'other great man, and it's good fun to see how my Lady Jehu ogles him, when he presents her with the fox's brush. Now I suppose, Miss, you thinks that he goes home and gets half seas over, and falls asleep. 'Tis no such a thing, I do assure you. He reads some outlandish book, or plays the musics, or walks by the light of the moon, and that makes folks think that he's crossed in love.'

Harry continued to talk himself out of breath, and Laura was not disposed to interrupt him. 'Perhaps, Miss, you don't know that Mr. Edward is a soger; but he never wears his red coat when he can help it: he was persuaded to leave Oxford and to go into the Militia of the country, where his father

who is dead and gone, was parliament-man. To be sure I wasn't a little glad to turn my back upon college; the Oxonons in their gounds and trenchards did so jeer at me, when they heard me talk; they used to call me a literate clown; and after all they be only a parcel of school-boys themselves. One day they was quizzing Mr. Edward about me, and he said to 'em, says he, 'for I remember his very words—" Harry possesses the genuine feelings of honesty and fidelity, and it matters very little in what sort of language they are expressed." But he didn't go on for to tell 'em how he took to me, and made a man of me, ever since he saved my life, when the miller's old sorrel mare runned away, as I was driving her in father's cart. You must know, Miss, the old jade was in a

desperation hurry to get back to her own stable, and so—— but don't you see somebody beckoning me from the house?—Well I'm coming—I'm coming!' Good morning, my lady: I shall tell Mr. Edward that you have been so kind and condescending as to talk to me a great deal.'

CHAP. VII.

What pure and white wing'd agents of the sky,
Who rule the springs of sacred sympathy,
Inform congenial spirits when they meet?
Sweet is their office, as their nature sweet!

THERE is no enjoyment more tender and delicious, than to gaze on the pale countenance of a friend who is just rescued from the arms of death!— We dwell on every look, on every word, as if we feared that the beloved object was still going to be torn from us. How elevated, how faultless does that object appear! and how sincere are all gratulations, and vows of affection, that the heart then dictates!

Edward was now sufficiently recovered to come into the drawing-room; and though he could not yet be called the friend of Laura, he had obtained an interest in her heart, which the touching languor of his appearance contributed to strengthen. He was yet too unwell to think of leaving Woodleigh, but was recommended gentle exercise; and sometimes, in the cool of the evening, would walk on the beach with Laura, to inhale the sea breezes. In the shrubbery was a beautiful alcove, formed of green lattice-work, and entirely covered with sweet briar and woodbine; the sofas were of light green taffeta, the pavement was of variegated marble, and in different compartments it was ornamented with fine vases, containing the most fragrant exotics. In this charming retreat they

often passed the most sultry hours of the day. Edward was still too weak to endure the exertion of reading; and, at his earnest request, Laura, while sitting at her work, would sometimes amuse him by reciting passages from her favourite poets; however, she pricked her fingers, and spoiled her muslin, therefore she preferred reading to him aloud; but generally found, that, during the space of an hour or two, she had never finished above four or five pages: the rest of the time had been employed in discussing the beauties of the book she had chosen, or in interesting conversation on the subject of which it happened to treat. At the close of these conversations, Laura often mentally exclaimed, 'how extraordinary! he has spoken exactly the sentiments I

have long felt; but I never before heard them expressed, and I could scarcely define them to myself!' Sometimes she requested him to give her lessons in perspective, and to correct her drawings: sometimes she played to him on her harp.

'How do you like this alcove?' said she to him, one morning.

'Excuse my frankness;' replied he, 'when I venture to tell you, that I do not *quite* approve it.'

'And why not?'

'It is not sufficiently simple: when I walk forth amid the charms of Nature, I wish to banish from my mind every idea that can recall the luxuries

of society; and, if I were fatigued, I had rather recline on some mossy bank, or rustic bench, than in the most sumptuous pavilion. Let art and elegance exhaust their embellishments on stately halls and magnificent saloons: but in shrubberies and parks, in every spot where we woo Nature, every decoration ought to be in unison with her captivating simplicity.'— Laura listened attentively, but did not reply.

It rained for two days after this conversation, and they did not revisit the alcove: but, what was Edward's surprize when Laura, again conducting him there, stopped at the low entrance, and exclaimed, ' See, I have covered the costly pavement with this coarse rush mat; I hope you will ap-

prove these humble seats: and I am sure that even an hermit need not blush to deposit the contents of his scrip on this table. I rather regretted to part with my favourite plants; however, I have ordered them to be placed in the drawing-room. But why should I regret them? What can be more lovely than this rose?' (continued she, plucking one from a festoon that hung over the low entrance.) 'You said truly, nothing is so beautiful as Nature!'

'Nothing is so beautiful as Nature!' repeated Edward: 'and, ah! how fascinating is *that* face, and *that* mind,' continued he, looking at Laura, with an absent air, as if the exclamation had been involuntary. Ah! why at that instant did Laura's cheek outblush

the rose that she held in her hand? Why did she bend her head over it, and begin to pull it to pieces? Had she never before received a compliment? Yes! but not from Edward. It cannot be denied! 'the fine suffusion on her cheek was love!'—but it was love of which she was still ignorant, and she was not over anxious to scrutinize into her heart; for what woman of delicacy ever chuses to avow to herself a passion, till she has received indubitable testimonies of reciprocal affection? Yet Laura might have avowed *her* love without blushing, for it was pure and elevated as the love of virtue. Her efforts had restored Edward to health and chearfulness; (we always look with complacency on those we have obliged)—she had dwelt with admiration on his talents and prin-

ciples; while the peculiar similarity of their sentiments had imbued her heart with those feelings of confidence, esteem, and tenderness, which had hitherto lain dormant, till awakened by the magic touch of sympathy. 'Surely,' she would exclaim, when reflecting on the pleasure she received from the society of Edward, 'Surely we may appropriate to ourselves these words of a celebrated author;* "Wherever there is sympathy there is *natural affection*, and of course, though personal strangers before, we meet on the terms of near relations, whom a wiser and better director than Chance has at length brought together."

---

* Pratt.

CHAP. VIII.

——————' Witness, ye Pow'rs,
How much I suffer'd, and how much I strove!

LAURA observed with concern, that Edward did not continue to regain strength, but even appeared more dejected than ever. He often invented excuses to remain whole hours alone in his own room: and instead of proposing, as usual, a walk on the beach in an evening, he preferred a game of backgammon with Sir Robert. Laura knew that he had lately received several letters, and she imputed the alteration in his manner to some secret uneasiness. She wished that he would

disclose it to her; but she was too delicate to notice what he appeared so studiously to conceal. 'The alcove has been quite deserted all the week,' said Laura to him, one morning; 'suppose I now take my work there?' 'Unfortunately I have letters to write,' answered Edward: 'Oh finish them in the evening,' retorted she. Edward bowed assent, and they proceeded thither. When they reached the bower, they both sat down, and remained a few minutes in awkward silence; till Laura interrupted it by exclaiming, 'I believe this sultry weather makes me quite stupid! will you be so obliging as to reach me that book? it contains Petrarch's Sonnets, and, perhaps, you will read some of them to me, while I work.' She said this with a faint smile, and merely to

break the lengthening pause. Never had she looked more beautiful; for the momentary embarrassment had tinged her cheek; and her auburn hair, totally unconfined, was blown over her face by the breezes that penetrated through the lattice. Edward gazed at her an instant, then hastily opened the book at the 69th sonnet, and began to read:

'Erano i capei doro all' aura sparsi.'*

He stopped again to gaze at her. 'Ah!' thought he, 'so looked the celebrated Laura, when she stole into the soul of Petrarch.' He continued to read for some time in a soft and plaintive tone, till, by degrees, his voice became more impassioned; suddenly it faultered, and

* 'Loose to the wind her auburn tresses flew!'

his countenance grew violently agitated. Then, as if struck with some agonizing reflection, and apparently totally unconscious of what he was doing, he threw the book from him, exclaiming, 'Ah! unfortunate Petrarch, how dost thou rend my heart! How similar are our woes!—to see the object of a first and ardent passion torn from us for ever! to behold her the wife of another!'

At these words Laura became pale as death; she thought she had discovered Edward's secret. He loved! but, alas! it was not herself that he loved! 'What have I been saying,' continued he, as if starting from a reverie, and looking fearfully at Laura. 'Do not be alarmed; you may confide in me,' cried she. 'I have long thought

that you were unhappy; but I did not imagine that you were in love with a *married* woman.' Fearing that these words contained a latent reproach, she endeavoured to soften them by a look of the tenderest concern. Edward shook his head, smiled faintly, and exclaimed:

'Hear me! and do not refuse me the consolation of your pity! Hear me; and strengthen my tottering resolution. Educated in what are termed romantic notions, I ever resisted the attractions of *soulless* beauty; and cherished in my imagination a visionary form, that was far more fascinating. *My* beloved was to be all sympathy! our spirits were to mingle like gentle streams that are lost in each other. With her I was to brave

the storms of ambition, or to smile in the sunshine of peaceful obscurity. Awhile I sought her in brilliant assemblies; but she was not there. I sought her amid "bevies of fair females," but she was not there. At length, I discovered her in the shades of retirement. "My heart recognized *her* of whose absence it had so long felt the void:" we met! but we met, alas! *too late*. "Reason, justice, honour, forbade the avowal of my affection. And yet she *might* have loved me! and to me she would have been *all in all!*"——

Just at this interesting period of Edward's discourse, Sir Robert Mapleton entered the alcove; and, for the first time in her life, Laura frowned on her father.

'Hey-day!' cried he; 'so I have interrupted a tete-a-tete! you both look as if my room would be more agreeable than my company. Didn't you hear the second bell ring? Come, come along, the venison will be quite cold!'

Early in the same evening Edward mentioned his intention of leaving Woodleigh the next morning. 'Why you quite surprize me, Mr. Somerville,' exclaimed Sir Robert. 'Your resolution seems to be very sudden: ha, ha! I guess how it is; some despairing damsel has sent you a doleful ditty, and you must set off, like a gallant Chevalier, to comfort her. But take care! take care! if she should hear of the alcove, and my Laura, she may fear that you have proved a false

knight.' Edward did not venture to look up; and Miss Mapleton's excessive confusion passed unnoticed.—Harry, who had just entered the drawing-room, to receive some orders from his master, dropt the parcel he held in his hand, and starting back, muttered, in a kind of stage whisper, that he intended every one to hear, 'Ods, my life! this is no joking matter to me though! poor Lucy too! how *she'll* be disappointed!' 'What do you say, Harry,' inquired his master? 'Oh! dear Sir, you'll put me into such a quandary if you goes away to-morrow! why, next Sunday I was to have been married to the prettiest girl in all the country; and the best too, though I say it that shouldn't say it.' 'But how came you not to mention this circumstance to me?' said Mr. Somerville.—

'Why, Sir, I knew you would be glad to hear it; and as good news always comes best upon a hop, as one may say, I should have brought Lucy to you, when the parson had tied us together, and I should have said, "give me joy, your honour! look at this pretty girl; she is my wife; and she is as good as she is pretty!'

'Well, I believe I shall trespass a little longer on your hospitality,' said Edward, turning to Sir Robert; 'a marriage of affection ought not to be postponed a day.'

'I am perfectly of your opinion,' replied he, 'particularly as it is a thing so rare. Besides, "increase and multiply," says the text.'

'Harry, how long have you been acquainted with your intended bride?' inquired M. Somerville.

"Why we have kept company, as one may say, a matter of six years: and love's like port wine; the older it is the better."

'Our modern grandmothers, Harry, would thank you for this opinion,' said Sir Robert; 'and many dashing bucks seem to agree with you, in giving the preference to an *old* love.'

'Your honour is pleased to joke,' continued Harry:—'but I was going on for to tell you that the first time I saw Lucy she was gleaning in the harvest field, a little blooming maid, about fifteen; and looked for all the world

like Miss Laura when she wears her large straw hat. And then I used to take her such great handfuls of wheat; and one day I says to her, "your eyes are as blue as these corn-flowers, and your little mouth is like these poppies:" and she did smile so, when she put 'em into her bosom! but at night mother called me "lazy rascal;" and father upped with his stick: however, I went to bed, and dreamt of Lucy. Ah! those were good times! but I was soon forced to go out to sarvice, and when I returned to our parish, Lucy was comed with her parents to settle in these parts: and I walked here a matter of twenty miles one terrible hot day, to tell her I was true-hearted: but I couldn't have the face to ask her to marry a poor carter, when her father was a farmer, and well to do in the

world: however, it was'nt long before *I* too began for to hold up my head, thanks to God and my master! and then I came here pretty often: but she put me off from day to day;—"It was inconvenient"—— and this, that, and the other;—but last Monday I said to her, says I, it's never inconvenient to be happy: so what d'ye think of being married next Sunday? the better day the better deed. You shall live here with father and mother, and I can be for ever backwards and forwards; besides, who knows how soon Mr. Edward may be married? and then you can wait upon his lady.'

At this observation Edward vainly endeavoured to suppress a sigh!—Laura ventured to steal a glance at him; but she perceived that he was

looking at her, and again cast down her eyes with the rapidity of lightning.

'Well, I wish you good luck, Harry' said Sir Robert; 'and do you remember to tell Steevens to prepare the wedding dinner.' 'I humbly thank your honour,' replied Harry, bowing to the ground. 'But odds my life! whilst I'm prating here, Lucy is waiting for me; for we're going to Fishborne fair this evening.' Thus saying, he skipt out of the room, leaving both Edward and Laura to envy the felicity of these simple and faithful lovers.

CHAP. IX.

'Se donavan gli antichi una corona
A chi salvasse a un cittadin la vita,
Or che digna mercede a voi si dona
Salvando moltitudine infinita?'

EARLY the next morning, Edward, on entering the breakfast-room, observed that Miss Mapleton was there much sooner than usual, and accosted her, by enquiring 'if she had heard the adventures of the preceding evening?' "O! yes," replied Laura, "I was summoned to the cottage of Lucy's parents after all the rest of the family were gone to bed. I spent the greatest part of the night there; and when I returned home, my mind was so oc-

cupied with what I had heard and seen, that I could not sleep; and therefore employed myself in scribbling a poetic narration of an event that had so greatly interested me. Here it is:—You shall read it; for I do not attach so much value to my rhymes, as to feel mortified if they are not approved: but should they chance to please, I feel gratified by the praises of those whom I esteem." Thus saying, she put into his hands the following lines.

'Young Harry and Lucy, a beautiful pair,
As ever join'd hands on the green;
Returning at eve from a neighbouring fair,
Discours'd with delight of the gaieties there,
And the many fine sights they had seen.

'Said Lucy, "my Harry, I thank thee again
For a gift that I very much prize —
A little chip hat is so simple and plain,
I'm sure 'tis becoming; and you know I would fain
Appear pretty and smart in thine eyes.'

"Ah! see," replied Harry "a fairing I bring,
'That I soon shall behold on thy hand:

For next Sunday my Lucy will wear this gold ring,
And make her fond lover more blest than a king,
Or the wealthiest lord in the land!"

She blush'd, yet she smil'd, at the words he had said,
Nor sought to dissemble her bliss;
But frankly the vows of affection repaid:
Their love was a contract that long had been made,
And 'twas finally seal'd by a kiss.

Thus sweetly they talk'd, and beguil'd the long way,
Nor heeded that night was come on;
For soon the full moon shed a silvery ray,
That brighten'd the landscape, as tho' it were day;
And they journey'd, delighted, along.

Their path led thro' a wood; but the nightingale's
Was soon lost in the ocean's loud roar: [strain
Then they mounted a cliff that hung over the main,
Where the moon softly beam'd on the watery plain,
And slept on the opposite shore.

Said Lucy, 'how charming, how cool is the breeze!
And *now* all my spirits are glad!
But my Harry, how often, such evenings as these,
I think on my brother who died at the seas!
While I look at the moon, and am sad:

'Yet O! thou art more than a brother to me;
My guardian! my pride! my delight!
And to think how delighted my parents will be,
When our curate shall solemnly join me to thee;
They will almost grow young at the sight.

'Look yonder,' she cried, 'at that swift gliding sa il
And her hand she withdrew from his side,
To point to the canvas that swell'd in the gale;
Then careless ran forward—alas! her feet fail!—
She screams, and falls into the tide!

Poor Harry, distracted with grief and dismay,
Like an arrow sprang into the main;
To restore his belov'd to the regions of day,
Or clasp to his breast her inanimate clay,
Till death should unite them again.

Hark! she calls on his name! hark! how piteous her [cries
All tumultuous the rough billows roll;
But eager he presses to rescue his prize—
Ah! how faintly she shrieks!—now sinks from his [eyes,
And the waters rush over her soul!

Despairing, aghast at the horrible sight,
Harry dives, and fast seizes her hand;
But alas! all her senses are shrouded in night,
And fainting, oppress'd with dismay and affright,
He bears her cold corpse to the land:

Then half frantic he hastily took her away
To a cottage with ivy o'erspread;
Where her parents were chiding their Lucy's delay;
Harry saw them, but wept not, and only could say,
'Oh! look at your child!—she is dead!'

The sight was too much for a mother to bear;
She sunk in a swoon to the ground:
Her father in agony tore his grey hair;
But Harry, the image of silent Despair,
Gaz'd sullen and senseless around.

Now it chanc'd that the Curate was passing the door,
And beheld the sad cause of their grief:
Then he cried, 'My good friends, thy lamentings give [o'er!
It is not yet too late, I thy child may restore,
Hasten, hasten to bring her relief!'

The mother revives at this heart-thrilling sound;
And to Lucy such succours were giv'n,
As Humanity widely dispenses around
To recall the lost spirit of those who are drown'd—
Humanity, handmaid of Heaven!

'Ah! no!—thou cans't never restore her to me!'
Poor Harry despondingly cried;
'But ah! my belov'd, I will hasten to thee,
And soon from these bonds of mortality free,
I shall meet thee, my beautiful bride!'

Yet soon every bosom with rapture o'erflows,
For some signs of existence she gives:
Her pulse gently beats;—now her countenance shows
The delicate tint of a drooping blush rose:
Ah! now she breathes faintly—she lives!

Then Harry with ecstasy gaz'd on the maid,
And exclaim'd, 'Heard ye not her soft sighs?'
'My delight, my soul's darling, ah! lift up thy head!
Ah! speak to thy Harry! awake from the dead,
And open those heavenly eyes!'

'Where am I?' she cried: 'twas the voice of my [love;
I saw him plunge into the tide:
Has my spirit ascended the regions above?
Or was it a dream?—do I speak?—do I move?
And does Harry now stand by my side?

'Oh! when I was dying I thought upon thee,
And I felt it was dreadful to part!
I thought too how wretched my mother would be;
Then sorely I shriek'd as I sunk in the sea,
For horror envelop'd my heart!'

Who can paint what a parent, a lover must feel,
Thus to see their lost darling restor'd?
The soft tears of rapture adown their cheeks steal,
But language is futile such bliss to reveal;
And some moments they spoke not a word:

Till her father exclaim'd, 'all our anguish is o'er!'
Young Harry, she still will be thine!—
Then let us, my children, that Being adore,
Who pleas'd in his mercy our joy to restore,
Let us bend at his heavenly shrine.

And oh! may our Curate each happiness know,
That heart can desire or conceive!
And may all who like him with humanity glow,
Who restore the lost spirit, and charm away woe,
Keep tenfold the blessings they give!

'I see,' cried Laura, when Edward returned her manuscript, 'that you are satisfied with my poetic attempt. The measure is certainly pretty: I imitated it from a poem in a much talk'd of Novel.

'But you have not read the Monk?' cried Edward, smiling. 'Oh,' resumed she, 'you must never expect to receive such a confession from a young lady: and, I hope you know me too well to suppose I would read in private what I should blush to read aloud. —No! I assure you, I would never intentionally sully my mind with the images of impurity. At the same time, I cannot but regret, that he who could write such poems as "Alonzo the brave," and the "Exile," has not charmed the world with some publication that might not be obnoxious to the eye of modesty. But to return to poor Lucy. You cannot form to yourself an idea of the scene I witnessed. What horror! what trembling hope! what final exultation! and how they all overwhelmed the Curate with ca-

resses, and blessings! Surely there never was so benevolent, so glorious an institution as the Humane Society! Oh! that in soaring verse I could speak my admiration of its illustrious Patrons! but weak is all human eulogy! "The blessings of those who were ready to perish" will come upon them here and hereafter. Choirs of Angels will hymn their praises! "for there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;" and what offering can be more grateful to the Deity than the soul of a poor despairing wretch, who is, by their exertions, restored to life and mercy?'

'You agree then with me,' cried Edward, 'that *suicide* is a great crime?' 'Undoubtedly,' resumed Laura, 'and the *most dreadful, as it is the only crime*

that precludes the possibility of repentance. To the virtuous man Death is divested of half his terror; "for he who sleeps on the bosom of his father fears not to be awakened:" * but *he*, alas! who, in a fit of disobedience and ill-humour, scorns the paternal guidance, and wilfully lies down to sleep on the brink of an impenetrable abyss, ought *he* to be surprized, if, at the hour of awaking, he should feel himself o'erwhelmed in horror, and utterly abandoned?"

---

* Qui s'endoit sur le sein d'un pere n'est pas en souci du reveil.

ROUSSEAU.

CHAP. X.

'Thus the sweet suff'rer, like the Spartan child,
Who hid his theft, and midst his tortures smil'd;
Conceal'd her agony, and veil'd with art,
The stolen passion preying on her heart.'

BEFORE the day appointed for the wedding of Harry and Lucy, Sir Robert received a letter from Colonel Somerville, to inform him that he intended coming to Woodleigh the following week: and, in the course of the same morning that this letter arrived, Edward mentioned, 'that particular business would oblige him to hasten his departure, even before he could see his brother; but that he might not postpone the wedding, he would dis-

pense with Harry's attendance, at least, for a month or six weeks.'

In the evening, after having made his acknowledgements to Sir Robert and Miss Mapleton, in the most graceful and impressive manner, he mounted his horse, and rejoined his regiment, which was quartered at the distance of only sixteen miles. Laura had accompanied him to the hall door, and he had nearly reached the elm-walk, where she had first seen him, before she could find resolution to quit the steps, and re-enter the house; but observing that he had turned his head, and fearing that he should notice her having so long remained fixed to the same spot, she hastily withdrew to her own apartment, and there gazed at him from the window, till his form

was no longer discernible among the trees; and then, 'then she would have turned her eye and wept;' but that she never *indulged* a weakness; and love had not yet gained the ascendancy over reason. 'Why,' thought she, "should I feel thus dejected at his departure? Probably I shall soon behold him again! and for such trivial causes does *friendship* bedim the eyes with tears? Alas! how should I tremble if it were a more tender interest that thus agitates me! but no! I feel none of those violent emotions that characterize passion. I love Edward as I have loved the pure attributes of perfection. When I am with him, I taste a tranquil, spontaneous, undefinable delight; something like what I have experienced at suddenly beholding a beautiful prospect; or at those mo-

ments when I have comforted the unhappy. I have none of the doubts, the fears, the jealousies of love, not even its hopes; for when I know that he is near me I feel as if I had nothing further to desire. I do not hesitate when he speaks to me: on the contrary, it is to him only that I could pour out my whole soul in confidence.'

Perfectly satisfied with the result of her self examination, she re entered the drawing-room, and seated herself at her harp: but unfortunately she had selected those plaintive strains that Edward had particularly admired; and nothing so forcibly recalls 'the memory of joys that are past,' as the repetition of the most simple air to which we have listened in a moment of delight. This sudden appeal to the heart of

Laura was 'mournful,' but not 'pleasing.' It awakened a train of reflections that vexed and agitated her. 'She wondered if the lady, who was beloved by Edward, was really so *very* charming; so *very* fascinating! Did she return his affection? and was there a probability that they would ever be united?' Laura had no clue to guide her in this labyrinth of conjecture; but she still continued bending over her harp in pensive meditation, till she saw her father enter the room, and she gladly advanced to meet him, thinking that he could not fail to talk about his young guest; but in this hope she was disappointed: for, though she often cautiously endeavoured to introduce the subject, he did not once indulge her by mentioning his name,

nor could Laura summons up sufficient resolution to mention it herself.

On the Tuesday subsequent to the departure of Edward, the intended wedding was joyfully celebrated at Woodleigh. It had been postponed from Sunday, by the particular request of Miss Mapleton, that the bride and bridegroom might invite all their friends to a dance on the bowling-green close to the house; at the time appointed, many of the villagers assembled, with the domestics of the family; and, after dancing as long as they wished, they partook of an excellent supper; when genuine pleasure and decent mirth usurped the places of affectation and ennui; those frequent intruders at crowded assemblies!— Laura was never more delighted with

a fete, for she beheld that finest of all spectacles, 'the human face divine,' arrayed in the smiles of health, content, and innocence.

Colonel Somerville wrote to postpone his visit. Three weeks had elapsed and Edward had not once made even a morning call at Woodleigh. 'Surely,' thought Laura, 'he ought to have been here before this time, if only in mere politeness to my father. Is it possible I can have been mistaken in his character? Why did he never explain to me the history of his mysterious attachment? Often did I endeavour, but without success, to renew the subject. Ah! no! I cannot have been deceived! I have seen such indisputable, such internal evidences of his virtue. How often has he uttered

the purest sentiments of morality! with what unfeigned tenderness has he dilated on the joys of sympathy and domestic union! how energetic was his manner, when he read to me the heroic deeds of other times! his countenance glowed, and he seemed animated by the same spirit that had prompted those glorious actions! He may have been unfortunate; but surely it is impossible that his heart can be criminal. Alas! should I ever discover that he does not merit my esteem, I feel, that for the future, I shall suspect, and hate the whole world!'

Such were the solitary reflections of Laura; and they injured her peace of mind, though they had not the power to ruffle her temper. She concealed

her chagrin from her father; but she sometimes laughed, and talked so much, that she almost overacted her part. When she was alone, her false spirits entirely forsook her; and often, after she had remained some minutes absorbed in thought, she would put her hand to her heart, and unconsciously exclaim, 'indeed I am *very* unhappy!' then suddenly recollecting herself, she firmly resolved that she would forget Edward. 'Mais en pensant qu'il faut oublier on s'en souvient.'

CHAP. XI.

'Redoutez moi; sachez que malgrè ma faiblesse,
Ma fureur pent aller plus lois que ma tendresse.'

'HE is coming! he is coming!' cried Laura, one morning, as she was standing at the drawing-room window.

'Who is coming?' said Sir Robert: but Laura could not answer him; she was already at the hall-door, and in less than five minutes more she had run to the entrance of the elm-walk. There she stopped, and was overwhelmed with confusion when she beheld, *not* Edward, but Colonel Somerville.

'How you enchant me, lovely Miss Mapleton,' exclaimed he, checking his horse, 'by appearing thus anxious to see me! how beautiful you look! but really you seem quite out of breath; and you will spoil your complexion if you come so far in the middle of the day without your hat.'

These observations increased poor Laura's confusion. She was particularly mortified that *he*, of all others, should flatter himself with having obtained an interest in her heart: but she could not avow the truth; and she blushed, and looked down, without uttering a syllable. The Colonel pretended to construe this embarrassment in his favour; but he had sufficient penetration to discover, that he was not the person for whom so flatter-

ing a reception was intended. Sir Robert received him with a visible emotion, that surprized and alarmed Laura, though she knew not why.

'We expected you here long since, Colonel,' exclaimed he.

'Yes,' replied the Colonel, 'it was my intention to have come to Woodleigh much sooner; but Pharoah and his Host detained me longer than I wished: and, let me tell you, some of the Syrens of the Red Sea are very beautiful damsels, and very fascinating; though they fascinate to destroy: but, like a second Ulysses, I have resisted all their seductions; and like him I am come to pass the remainder of my days on the bosom of love and innocence.'

Sir Robert looked at his daughter, but she would not appear to notice what had been said.

'Alas! you would pity me,' resumed Colonel Somerville, 'if you knew the baits that have been laid to ensnare me into the trap of matrimony. It was soon discovered that I had a large fortune; and I have had to endure the dinners and suppers of fathers and mothers, uncles and aunts, who have portionless beauties to dispose of: together with the more sickening insipidity, or fashionable vulgarity, of half the unmarried Misses about town. But Gulliver was not to be fettered by the feeble arts of the Lilliputians; and a man of sense never suffers his heart to be enthralled, unless by the

united spells of modesty, talents, and virtue.'

Just at this time Sir Robert left the room; and Laura, with a kind of arch smile, asked Colonel Somerville, 'how long it was since he had acknowledged the supremacy of mental charms?'

'From the first hour that I had the honour of being acquainted with Miss Mapleton!' replied he, bowing; 'and believe me, we dashing fellows, who have seen the world, and are not over-scrupulous in our own conduct, know the value of virtue in a wife better, perhaps, than any other set of men: and it was principally for this reason, that, when I thought of marriage, I resolved to offer my hand and heart

to the lovely girl who now sits opposite to me, and with one word can insure my happiness for ever.' Thus saying, he looked at Laura, with as much tender expression as he well knew how to throw into his fierce black eyes. Laura replied, in a very serious tone of voice, 'I regret, Sir, that you have forced me to a declaration which may not please you; and yet I think it ought not to surprize you, for I have never given you reason to imagine that you have gained an interest in my affections.'

'Oh! certainly not,' rejoined the Colonel, with much *sang-froid*, 'and yet there are some young men who would not have required greater encouragement, than to see a lovely

girl running towards them with every demonstration of joy, and so absent at their approach, as to have forgotten a material article of her dress.'

Laura was utterly unable to proceed; and the Colonel for some minutes enjoyed her confusion, till at last he resumed the conversation, by 'requesting to know, why he might not hope to be honoured with her favourable opinion?'

'It is utterly repugnant to my feelings,' replied she, 'to specify any particulars that may give pain in the recital: suffice it to say, that I can *never* take a solemn promise to love and esteem you more than all the rest of mankind.'

'Ah!' reflect, Miss Mapleton,' resumed he, 'on the advantages you refuse! consider what an immense fortune; what a noble establishment I offer you; what a beautiful place; what splendid equipages might be yours! and what joy to enter your box at the opera, all glittering in diamonds, and to hear the loud whisper, which proclaims the envy of your own sex, and the admiration of ours!'

'Believe me,' replied Laura, 'I should feel perfectly insensible to all the delights you have specified. When I am married, I shall only wish to charm my husband; I have no ambition to "glitter in diamonds; and the only gem that I value is a pure and spotless heart."

'And therefore you reject *mine*?' said the Colonel. 'Upon my soul, Madam, your figurative language is not very polite! but remember, Miss Mapleton, that I am not one of those whining lovers, who can "sigh whole ages at a beauty's feet:" and, when next I condescend to offer you my hand, *beware* that you do not refuse!'— Thus saying, with an air of indignant pride, and sullen resentment, he stalked out of the room; leaving Laura so much rejoiced at his departure, that she soon forgot his boded vengeance.

CHAP. XII.

'In vain does memory renew
The hours once ting'd in transport's dye,
The sad reverse soon starts to view,
And turns the thought to agony.'

O YE who bear in your bosoms the embers of a kindling or a dying passion, disdain not to profit by the example of Laura! Take heed lest ambition tempt ye to the altar of Hymen! The fire that's closest kept burns most of all, and the flame of love, that virtue strives to smother, too frequently consumes both health and peace. O! rather suffer it to evaporate in sighs and tears; nor dare to undertake the most sacred of

duties with an alienated heart! It would then be criminal even to think on the lost object of affection—and yet the recollection of what might have been, will perpetually force itself on the mind, and embitter all that is. Indifference will soon become disgust, and disgust will soon terminate in rooted aversion.

It is then that the wedded captive has reason to exclaim with La Bruyere, 'Regretter ce qu'on aime est un bien, en comparaison de vivre avec ce que l'on hait.

The mind of Laura seemed relieved of half its sorrows, now that she had made known her determination to Colonel Somerville; and yet she was rather apprehensive that her rejection of his hand might irritate her father. Luck-

ily, however, he did not know any thing of what had passed; and the Colonel appeared desirous that it should remain a secret; for he was as attentive as usual in his manner, and did not take leave till three or four days after the conversation which he had broken off with so much anger.

Laura was again left to the indulgence of her melancholy; and it was of that tranquil kind which is not without charms. Often she took her books into the arbour, and read over and over again those beautiful passages that Edward had marked with his pencil: but she oftener amused herself by calling to mind their long conversations, the expression of his countenance, and the tone of voice that had penetrated to her heart. Sometimes that heart was so

imbued with the shapeless tenderness of infant love, that the visionary maid could almost imagine that nothing was necessary to her happiness but to *think* on Edward. Her feelings were as new as they were delightful, and she experienced how precious are those moments when sentiments of the mind are converted into sensations of the heart. Sometimes her reveries assumed a gloomy hue: 'it is still,' thought she, 'no crime to think on him—but oh! if he should ever become the husband of another!' When such reflections assailed her, she could not remain in the arbour, but usually repaired to the cottage of poverty and sorrow; for, while she checked the tears of others, she smiled away her own. At other times she would endeavour to gain composure by seeking the animated scenes of Nature. It was now the season of an

abundant harvest, and the fields were thronged with the industrious peasantry. All were busy, and all seemed happy. The reaper toiled hard, that he might finish his task before night. Young girls were gleaning around; and even the little children were not idle, for they sometimes picked up a few wheat ears, and carried them in triumph to their smiling sun-burnt mothers. Laura sometimes assisted them to increase their little store, and delighted to watch their infantine gambols.

During one of these walks, Laura, one morning, stopped to observe a beautiful boy, of about the age of sixteen or seventeen, who had fallen asleep beneath a spreading oak. His arm was thrown carelessly round his head; his light hair

curled over his forehead, and a faint smile, that even in sleep still played about his mouth, proclaimed that he was innocent and happy. Laura gazed at him a few moments in pensive silence, and having reached a cool sequestered spot, she took out her pencil, and wrote the following

SONNET.

How sweet the slumber of yon peasant boy,
Who on the shady bank at peace reclines,
To rest a moment from his rude employ,
While the meridian sun thus fiercely shines!
Softly his wearied spirit he resigns
To balmy sleep, that no harsh cares destroy;
His life is toilsome, but he never pines
For better fortune, or tumultuous joy:
Thrice happy! when the maiden he loves best
At eve will listen to his tender sighs;
Thrice happy! when her image is impress'd
On the light dream that floats before his eyes.
Ah! peasant boy, I envy thee such rest
As from *my troubled* heart for ever flies!

Laura frequently accompanied her father in his evening walks, and she was

delighted to observe that he treated her with unusual affection; and even bestowed on her some of those paternal caresses with which she had been seldom indulged. This alteration in his conduct was made at a time when her heart was peculiarly susceptible of tender and grateful impressions: but these impressions were often mingled with those of sorrow and alarm, when she beheld her father's goomy countenance. He who till lately had never appeared to think at all, was now perpetually absorbed in thought. Sometimes he would put his hands to his forehead, as if to restrain some terrible reflection, or start from his seat, and pace about the room in violent agitation; or gaze intently on Laura, and begin some incoherent sentence; then, as if fearing

to divulge a fatal secret, he would cast on her an agonized supplicating look, and abruptly leave the room.

Notwithstanding these appearances of hidden grief, Sir Robert one morning mentioned his sudden intention of paying a visit to Colonel Somerville. The carriage was ordered to the door, and when Laura saw her father ready to depart, she felt her spirits unusually depressed, and besought him to return soon.

CHAP. XIII.

Non je ne l'ai point dit, mon trouble m'emportait;
Si je parlais ainsi, mon coeur me démentait.

SIR Robert Mapleton returned, alas! but too early; for when, after the expiration of a week, Laura ran to welcome him at the hall door she involuntarily started back with horror on observing the frantic expression of his countenance. He seemed to shudder as he looked around him; and, without speaking, made a sign for her to follow him into the library. They both sat down some moments in dreadful agitation; till Sir Robert interrupted the

fearful silence, by exclaiming, in the hollow tone of despair, 'I am ruined! ruined past all redemption!'

'Gracious Heaven! my father!—speak! O tell me instantly what you mean?' cried Laura, gasping for breath. 'I mean,' exclaimed he, with desperate composure, 'that I have entailed misery on my only child, and that I shall pass the remainder of my days in a prison.'

Laura's blood seemed to freeze in her veins; for her quick imagination conjured up phantoms of guilt, and dishonour connected these with the idea of a prison. 'Oh! let me hear the very worst,' cried Laura; 'for nothing can be so torturing as this dreadful suspence.' 'Know, then,' answered her father, 'that Colonel Somerville has

threatened to arrest me! I have a long time owed him large sums of money; I gamed with him, in the hope of retrieving them: but a cursed run of ill luck has pursued me. I am destitute of every resource; and perhaps this very night I may be turned out of my house, which, together with my landed property, has long been mortgaged beyond its value.'

Laura felt the reality so much less terrible than the thought that her father was going to suffer punishment for some terrible crime, that she exclaimed, with almost an appearance of satisfaction, 'thank God! you have only lost your fortune!'

'What do you say?' retorted Sir Robert, while his eyes flashed anger; 'cruel, unfeeling girl, how dare you

insult my misfortunes! Oh! what can be more lamentable than to lose every comfort of life?—be torn from the peaceful abode where my ancestors have lived and died full of years and honour—be reviled as a gamester—to be sneered at as a dupe—to be pitied by those who have envied me—to lose my liberty, and never more to behold this noble mansion, these beautiful shrubberies that I had planted for my grand-children!—Alas! unfortunate girl, and will you still tell me that I have *only* lost my fortune? and will you not hate me when those delicate hands are employed in servile occupations? and will you not curse me while you eat the bitter bread of dependence?'

'Ah! never, never!' exclaimed Laura, melting into tears, (for grief

had rendered even Sir Robert eloquent) 'but have we then *no* hope? Are there no means of propitiating Colonel Somerville?' 'Do *you* ask that question, Laura?' said Sir Robert, casting on her a most piteous and imploring look.

'My father, I understand you but too well!' replied she, shuddering—'But oh! if ever I have been dear to you—if ever my infantine prattle has beguiled your cares—if ever you have looked on me as the pride and solace of your declining years,—ask not your child, your only child, to sacrifice her happiness for ever! Perhaps our situation is not so deplorable as you imagine. You may remember I have a hundred a year left me by my aunt. I will never leave you. I can paint;

I can embroider; I will cheerfully submit to the most humble employment, if you will not condemn me to a servitude of heart and mind!'

'You talk like a romantic girl—you know not the frightful evils of poverty,' rejoined Sir Robert, with a disappointed and desponding air. 'I did not suppose you would have thought any sacrifice too great to preserve your father from contempt and misery.—Yet, what is this mighty sacrifice that I require of you?—To become the wife of a man who adores you—to continue in these shades, which are so dear to you; and where the blessings of the cottager will attune your soul to domestic felicity. Think on those who will be left to indigence and

sorrow, if you desert them:—and, oh! think on your aged father, languishing, dying in a prison!—My Laura, you seem softened! With one word you can restore me to happiness.—O God! am I not sufficiently humiliated: and must I ask my own child to have pity on me?——Thou blest benignant spirit, once her mother, look down and awaken in her soul the remembrance of thy virtues!—Ah!—yes—she will strive to emulate thee: she cannot abandon me to despair while thus I kneel'——

He was going to prostrate himself at her feet; but Laura threw herself into his arms, and exclaimed in an agony of tears, 'O my father! you have conquered!——I will marry him to morrow, to-night, this very instant.'

'God bless you, my child!' whispered Sir Robert as he pressed her to his heart: then, after they were a little more composed, he told her that nothing of what had passed should transpire, and that there was no immediate haste for her marriage, as her word was a sufficient security for the execution of her promise.

CHAP. XIV.

'Vivi e sappi ch'io t'amo e non t'el celo.'

WITH a breaking heart Laura left the library; and, almost unconscious whither she was going, she went through the hall door into the park. Her senses seemed quite bewildered, and she ceased to weep; indeed she could scarcely persuade herself that all she had heard was not a dream. The sun was now sinking behind the distant hills, and the tranquil ocean reflected the luxuriant hues of an autumnal evening. Laura threw her eyes over the prospect:—she felt the breezes that revived her to a consciousness of mi-

sery, and burst into tears. 'Alas!' thought she, 'how often have I gazed on these scenes when I was happy!—O! just Heaven, can it be possible! and am I now so lost a wretch!—This morning, when I saw the rising sun, how little did I think of the misery that awaited me: and yet even then I dared to repine!—What! and must a fatal promise bind me to him whom I detest?—and is it *here* that I must wear those galling chains at which my soul revolts?—*here*, in the midst of scenes where I have felt *such* happiness?—O Edward! my first, my only friend—and must I lose thee for ever? Would that I could close my eyes, and never open them again!'

With this wish, so often made in the first paroxysms of grief, she threw her-

self on the same bench from whence she had once taken a beautiful drawing of the opposite scenery. The contrast betwecen her former and her present feelings was too much for her to endure. She started up, when suddenly her attention was arrested by some letters that appeared recently carved on the chesnut tree. She approached, looked more close, and perceived the word 'LAURA' marked in large characters, and beneath it this sentence from Metastasio,

> - - - - - - - 'l' ameto nome
> Di colei per cui mi moro.' *

She looked, and looked again, wiped away the tears from her eyes; she seemed fascinated to the spot—'Ah yes!

- - - * The name beloved,
Of her for whom I die.

thought she, 'it must be so! These letters must have been traced by Edward, for his brother does not understand Italian.' The blood rushed from her heart to her face. For the first time it glanced across her mind that Edward loved her: and there is no moment of existence so fraught with ecstacy, as that which brings with it the sweet, the sudden conviction, that we are not indifferent to the object we have secretly adored. 'He loves me,' cried she—'what can I desire more?—and she sunk down on the bench, absorbed in that single idea. When at length she rose from her seat she was surprised to observe that it was beginning to grow dusk, and fearing that her father would be very much alarmed at her long absence, she hastened homeward through the shrubbery.

As she walked along, she could not avoid recollecting that conversation in the alcove, which appeared so unpropitious to her dawning hopes. One doubt produced another, and she relapsed into her former despondence. The sense of real misery returned with aggravated force. 'Ah!' exclaimed she, 'wherefore should I wish him to love me?—Am I not the destined wife of his brother? Am I not the veriest wretch that breathes?'

Saying these words, she entered the alcove; for she felt too much agitated to proceed: and throwing herself on one of the seats, she placed both hands over her face, and sobbed convulsively. Suddenly she thought she heard some one sigh—she trembled—looked up—and discerned the form of Edward.

'O! pardon me, Laura, if I have alarmed you!' cried he in a faltering voice. 'I came to take a last farewell of these scenes, that I shall never more behold!—but, my God! I have heard you weep!—you have distracted my soul—and I cannot tear myself away while I know that you are unhappy!—But why is not my brother here, to wipe away those tears?'

'Do you mean to insult my misfortunes?' cried Laura, totally deprived of all recollection.

'What do I hear?' exclaimed the astonished Edward. Alas! is not my brother the adored idol of your soul? and is not the day fixed that is to unite you for ever?—Gracious Heaven! you weep anew! What means that mourn-

ful gesture? Laura, my beloved Laura, is not your destined husband the first and only object of your affection?—And have I not reason to curse the hour that gave me existence? Alas! what have I said? your tears have betrayed the fatal secret, that I have so long concealed. O beloved of my soul, why should I pain your gentle nature by a discovery of my sufferings? I was preparing to leave the kingdom; for to have beheld you the wife of my brother would have been more dreadful to me than exile or death. You would have remained unconscious of my misery; for I had determined never more to behold you. But now that I have seen those heavenly eyes suffused in tears, I cannot depart till I know that you are no longer unhappy. Oh! if you could form to yourself an idea

of what I have suffered, you would at least regard me with pity! Oh! how I struggled to extinguish the passion that consumed me, when I heard that your heart was devoted to another? How often, in the silence of the night, when you have thought me far distant have I been wandering round these scenes of my departd happiness, and if I could perceive a light in your chamber, and fancy that I discerned your form through the window, I was satisficd: but more frequently I was disappointed, and retired; to pass the the remainder of the night in this bower, where I exhaled my grief in bitter lamentations.—Oh! Laura, can you pardon my weakness?—I know that I ought not to have disclosed these sentiments—but, Oh, forgive me—pity me!'

Thus saying, he pressed her hand to his lips: a tear dropt on it, and it penetrated to Laura's soul. She could not conceal her extreme agitation.

'Ah my beloved,' continued Edward, 'do not avert those eyes!—— But, my God! you blush!—you tremble!—Is it possible that I am not indifferent to you? I cannot endure that look of tenderness!—Frown on me!—Crush these presumptuous fancies!'

'Ah no!' cried Laura, 'I cannot dissemble! I love you, Edward, and I have never loved any one but you.

At this instant Colonel Somerville rushed into the alcove. Laura looked up, uttered a loud shriek, and fell senseless into the arms of Edward.

CHAP. XV.

'Twas agonizing as the stubborn conflict between existence and annihilation.'

'VILE seducer!' exclaimed Colonel Somerville, in a voice almost choaked by rage—'is this your boasted virtue?—to lurk here like a dastardly scoundrel, to steal away the affections of my destined wife!'

'O God!' cried Edward, without heeding what had been said, 'Laura is dying!—I cannot leave her:—run, I beseech you, for a drop of water.'

'No, truly,' replied the Colonel, 'I wish not to restore her to life, to hear

her tell you again that she loves you. Luckily I have my travelling pistols in my pocket. Here—take your choice of them. Perhaps my expiring groans may revive her.'

'What, lift my hand against my brother?' cried Edward, starting back with a look of horror.

'Away with such hypocritical cant,' said the Colonel, contemptuously, 'you had no objection to murder my peace.'

'I have not time to recriminate,' replied Edward calmly, or I believe it might not be difficult to prove that you have been the aggressor: be that as it may, I certainly shall not hazard an

existence that is now become so precious to me.'

'Cowardly rascal!' exclaimed his brother, stamping with rage, 'you disgrace the name of soldier: in *my* time courage was a necessary ingredient in that character. But I crave your pardon; you do not belong to a regular regiment—you are only a holiday Captain, and might probably faint at the smell of gunpowder.

'Ah! what did you say? I scorn your aspersions—I accept your challenge,' cried Edward, no longer able to restrain his indignation.

The moon was shining bright, and Edward gazed for a moment intently on the pale countenance of Laura, as

if to take a last survey of her beloved features; then gently placing her on the bench, he followed his brother out of the alcove, and prepared to receive his fire. The distance that Colonel Somerville measured was very short: he endeavoured to take good aim; he discharged his pistol. The ball whizzed past Edward, but fortunately it did not touch him; and he instantly fired off his own weapon in the air. After a silent aspiration of gratitude to the Almighty, Edward advanced towards his brother, and exclaimed, 'I think that I have vindicated my honour from your aspersions, and let me hope that you will not cherish your causeless animosity against me.'

With this conciliating sentence he extended his hand in token of forgive-

ness: but the Colonel refused to take it, and stalked off in sullen silence. Edward passed by him, and reached the arbour before him. Sir Robertwas there, and several servants; but Edward beheld no one but Laura. She faintly smiled as he entered. He threw his arms round her, and pressed her to his heart.

What a sight was this for Colonel Somerville, as he entered the arbour! 'Curse ye both!' cried he, in an inarticulate but thundering voice. At the sound of that detested voice, Laura raised her face, all covered with tears and blushes, (like a rose in a dewy morning; but unable to endure the fury of his countenance, sheltered her eyes, and again reclined her head on Edward's shoulder. Sir Robert stood

near them, trembling with anger and fear; but had sufficient presence of mind to dismiss the domestics. 'Is it thus, Miss Mapleton,' exclaimed the Colonel, 'that you fulfil your promise to your father?—Remember, it is from *your* hands that he receives the cup of misery, and believe me, ye shall both drink of it to the very dregs. This night I will deliver your father to the officers of justice, if you do not swear by all that is most solemn to marry me to morrow.'

'Gracious Providence! what do I hear?' cried Edward, starting back with surprise and horror.

'My father is not guilty,' replied Laura, 'but he has spent his whole fortune.

'How?—when?' interrupted Edward, in astonishment. Suddenly his countenance brightened, and he continued in an impassioned tone, 'Ah! my Laura, you will now be certain that I love you for *yourself*. I shall adore you more than ever, now that I am your equal; and may indulge the ecstatic hope of shielding you from poverty and affliction!'

'This is more than I choose to endure,' interrupted Colonel Somerville, almost suffocated with rage and jealousy; therefore, Miss Mapleton, determine quickly: either consent to become my wife, or to see your father this night within the walls of a prison.

'Pardon me! pity me!' cried Laura, throwing herself at her father's feet, 'Heaven is my witness that I would

die for your sake! but Oh! I can never marry!' Here her voice was lost in the tumults of her soul: and lifting up her streaming eyes to him, whose name she had vainly endeavoured to pronounce, she thus continued: 'Alas! how can you desire a bride, whose soul is devoted to another—who will weep and sigh for him whom she has lost, and never smile again?—Ah! let me appeal to your generosity! Strive not to separate those hearts that are already united by the sacred bonds of sympathy! Preserve my father from contempt and infamy! I will pray for you! I will bless you! I will promise never to be the wife of another:—but believe me, while I swear before the throne of Eternal Truth, that no threats, no terrors, no extreme of mi-

sery shall *ever* persuade me to be yours!'

'Oh! Laura!' cried Edward, raising her from the ground, 'you have preserved me from death or madness!—Whywill you not bestow on me a sacred title, to guard you from oppression?' 'By what right,' continued he, turning to his brother, 'do you presume to fetter the inclinations of Miss Mapleton?' 'Par le droit du plus fort,' answered he, with insulting composure; 'but I shall not think it worth my while to put Miss Mapleton to the inconvenience of breaking her vow; and if she will as solemnly declare that she will never marry without my consent, I may be induced to accept the compromise: nay, I believe that I will be so generous as to resign her to Mr. Edward Somerville, when he is suffi-

ently rich to cancel her father's debts.'

You well know that I am destitute of fortune or expectation,' cried Edward, resentfull.

'Do you hesitate, my child, to preserve me from ruin?' interrupted Sir Robert, in a mournful accent.

'Do not abandon me to despair!' whispered Edward.

'Alas!' replied Laura, 'how am I torn by contending emotions!—but I perceive the part that I ought to act, and my resolution must not falter.' Then advancing towards Colonel Somerville, she exclaimed, with an air of dignity, 'I hesitate not to sacrifice my

affections to my duty: and while my father remains at liberty, I promise—I take heaven to witness, that I will not marry, but on the conditions you have specified

'You will "sigh and live single" this many a day, imperious fair one,' retorted Colonel Somerville, vainly endeavouring to conceal his rage and disappointment; but if you should be tired of the Platonic system, Edward has only to lull me to sleep with some kind "oblivious potion!"

Edward recoiled at the horrible insinuation. The agonies of his soul seemed to convulse his frame. He felt as if the last words of Laura had annihilated his happiness for ever: and, with a reproachful and heart rending

tone, he exclaimed, 'Laura, you have abandoned me—you do not love!'—and then rushed out of the alcove.

'Ah how unjust!' replied Laura, bursting into tears.—'Hear me!—stay, I conjure you, one moment!'—She intreated in vain, for he was already far distant; and when he had reached the stable-yard, he mounted his horse, and rode off with the utmost speed. In the mean time Sir Robert supported his daughter to the house; and when she found herself in her own chamber, she gladly threw herself on the bed, and her frame was so entirely exhausted by the agitation of her mind, that she soon wept herself to sleep.

CHAP. XVI.

'Adieu! sweet bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please.'

THAT mortal is to be pitied who has never felt the many pleasurable tender sensations which connect themselves in the feeling heart with the word *home*—who has never known a local attachment and proudly stiles himself a citizen of the world! Ah! how much more to be pitied is the man who is driven for ever from the home that he loves; where he was born; where he loitered away the happy hours of childhood; and where every field, every tree seems almost to claim an interest in his affections! 'Home, sweet home!' thou art dear to

him who gazes from a splendid saloon on the beauties of his own domain, and sees the blue curling smoke that arises from the low thatched cottage, embowered in woods:—but thou art, perhaps, still dearer to the inmate of that cottage, as he takes his evening repast, amid the smiles of an healthy blooming progeny, 'who climb his knees, the envied kiss to share.' The poor fisherman, while he dries his nets on the sea-beach, does not sigh for the marine villa on the opposite shore: his cabin is sheltered from the tempests; it is his *own*: and he can never forget that it was *there* he first learnt to swim; that it was *there* he first became the happy possessor of a little boat.—Yes! security, peace, and early impressions of delight attach the heart to home; and if love, sweet, smiling, wedded love,

will dwell with us in our abode, what more is requisite to complete our felicity?—nothing but to communicate around us the blessings we receive!

Laura awoke early the next morning, and it was some time before she could distinctly recollect the occurrences of the last eventful evening: but while she was dressing herself, ideas began to rush in crowds upon her mind: she reflected that she had fallen from the summit of wordly prosperity into the depths of poverty; that she must no longer hope for admiration, or any pleasures and amusements usually so gratifying to youth and beauty:—yet—strange to say,—she did not feel unhappy; on the contrary, she had never thought her existence so sweet as at that moment.

'Edward loves me!' cried she, with rapture:—he has told me so! I cannot doubt it! For the first time in my life I feel that I am beloved!'

'Oh! what a charming morning is this!' continued she, opening the window:—'how fragrant the jessamine! how beautifully the dew-drops glitter on the rose trees, and how fast the sun disperses the purply mist from yonder mountains!—Yes! this is indeed a glorious world!—and Oh!' added she, raising her fine eyes to the unclouded canopy of heaven, 'accept, thou Sovereign of the universe, this my morning sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving! O grant that I may never hereafter behold the glories of creation without acknowledging, as now, the infinite goodness of the Creator!'

Laura was aroused from these soothing aspirations, by the entrance of her maid. 'Why do you weep, Susan?' enquired her mistress, observing that the poor girl could not restrain her tears, while she pretended to be setting the apartment in order.

'Oh! dear Ma'am,' replied Susan, almost sobbing, 'I am so afraid that I am going to be turned away with the rest of my fellow servants—Why, Ma'am, there has been such a to do in the family this morning, ever since five o'clock, that I declare I hardly know whether I stand upon my head or my heels.—But thank God! it can't be so bad as people says for neither,—for you, Ma'am, look just as cheerful as if nothing at all was the matter.'

'And what do people say?' enquired Laura, eagerly.

'Oh, Ma'am, I hope 'tis'n't true:—but the butler told Mrs. Stevens, the housekeeper, and she told me, that Watkins heard Colonel Somerville say to master, 'Sir Robert, you must to-night quit this house, that has so long been mine.'

'Alas, my poor father!' exclaimed Laura, bursting into tears. Susan, alarmed at seeing her in that state, hastily added—'Perhaps, Ma'am, 'tis'n't so bad as you think for, because the Colonel finished his speech by saying—'Your daughter knows on what conditions she may return.' I am sure these are the very words he said; be-

cause I made Mrs. Stevens repeat 'em to me twice over. There is such a bustle in the house; such hurry-skurry up and down stairs! Watkins is in master's room, packing up his clothes. Colonel Somerville looks as black as the chimney; and he sent for Mrs. Stevens, and the steward, and the coachman, and all the women servants, one by one; and paid 'em their wages, and trooped 'em off at an hour's warning: but it seems the pretty dairy-maid is to stay to take care of the house. A fine story indeed! I wonder she a'n't ashamed of herself. As for my part, I told the Colonel that I had the honour and pleasure to wait on Miss Mapleton, and that I would follow her to the world's end, if she had'n't the value of a pin's point to give me. And Oh, Ma'am,

continued Susan, 'pray let me wait upon you wherever you go!'

'Indeed, Susan,' answered Laura, 'I regret very much to part with you; but my father, for the future, will only be enabled to keep one servant.'

'O! that is just what I should like!' exclaimed the faithful girl: I can do all sorts of work; and really it would quite break my heart to leave you. Ah! Ma'am, do you think I shall ever forget the day that you gave me twenty guineas to buy off my brother when he listed for a soldier, and almost broke father's heart?—And do you think, Ma'am, I can ever forget when I had the fever, and you used to sit up with me a-nights, just as if I had been the first lady in the land?'

There are moments of sorrow, when the artless sympathy of a domestic, or even the caresses of a favourite animal, have more power to soothe the heart, than all the most eloquent forms of condolence. Laura smiled through her tears, and told Susan that she would comply with her request. Not feeling inclined to take any breakfast, she hastily went down stairs, and entered into the park. The autumnal tints were now beginning to paint the extensive wood; and the prospect had never appeared more beautiful. A tame fawn, that had been accustomed to feed out of Laura's hand, came bounding up to her. 'You do not know that I am going to leave you, Florio,' said she, wiping away a tear thatwas stealing down her cheek. She then proceeded to take a farewell of the garden, the

green-house, and the shrubbery. Every spot seemed doubly ~~dear~~ to her, now that she was going to leave it for ever. She wished to take one last look at the arbour, which was consecrated by the avowal of Edward's love, and by many tender recollections; but she perceived her father walking towards her, and hastened to meet him. His countenance was wild and haggard: he scarcely spoke; but often stopped; gazed intently on the objects around him; sighed bitterly, and proceeded with hurried steps. Laura did not venture to offer consolation: but at length she gained sufficient resolution to enquire 'what house was prepared for their reception?' Sir Robert sullenly answered, 'that they were going to be buried alive in the steward's cottage.'

As soon as Laura heard this, perceiving that he did not wish for her company, she returned to the house, to We arrangements for her departure. She dined in her own room; and by eight o'clock in the evening she had packed up her wardrobe, and was ready to obey Colonel Somerville's summons, when he sent to inform her that the carriage was waiting to convey her to her new abode. When she went down stairs, he met her with an insulting smile; and as he handed her into the post chaise, he told her, 'that he hoped her taste for solitude would not be of long duration.'

CHAP. XVII.

'Quando leggete---non vi sentite
Voi liquefare il cuore di dolcezza?'

THE habitation that was destined for the reception of Sir Robert and his daughter was a neat white house, that had lately belonged to one of Sir Robert's stewards. It was only two miles distant from the park. It stood on the sea shore, and was sheltered behind by an extensive wood. In the front was a small garden, well stocked with fruit and flowers; and the lower casements were almost covered with myrtles in full bloom.

To those who had never been accustomed to a noble mansion and magni-

ficent apartments, it would have appeared a delightful retreat: and even Laura was agreeably surprized that Colonel Somerville should have chosen that spot for their seclusion; a spot which she had often admired in her evening rambles. But as Colonel Somerville was one of those people who think that all green fields are alike, and that the shady side of Bond-street is a more agreeable promenade than the finest wood in the universe, he did not doubt that Laura would be terrified at the idea of passing her days in such a dismal solitude; and he flattered himself she might probably accede to his wishes, even before the expiration of a year.

Sir Robert secretly cherished the same opinion, and it induced him to

endure his present mortification and distress without upbraiding his daughter: for he well knew that harsh measures could never succeed with such a heart as her's; but that he had every thing to hope from her high sense of duty and filial affection.

Laura rose very early the next morning, and arranged her books, her harp, and drawing materials in a little parlour; where she assisted Susan in preparing the breakfast. After a silent and melancholy repast, Laura took up a volume of poems, and sauntered into the wood at the back of the cottage: but she was too much absorbed in her own contemplations, to attend to what she read: her eyes wandered over several pages, but her mind did not retain a single idea of all that she had per-

used. Suddenly she thought she heard the sound of footsteps; she looked up, and perceived that Susan was running towards her.

'Here, Ma'am, is a letter for you,' cried she, quite out of breath: 'a man on horseback brought it from Woodleigh; he had carried it there, according to the direction, but some of the servants told him that you was come away, and just as I was going out of the garden wicket he stopped at the rails, and said, "pray, Ma'am, does Miss Mapleton live here?"—'Yes, Sir,' says I, 'she does; worse luck.' 'He didn't make me any answer, but rode off immediately, after he had pulled out a letter from his pocket;—and see here it is, Ma'am.'

Laura looked at the direction, and exclaimed, 'good God! it is Edward's hand-writing!' and she hastily walked on, desiring Susan to return to the house.

Ah! how it makes the heart thrill with pleasure to receive a letter from the object of our tenderest love!—with what delight we hasten to explore our treasure in some spot, secure from interruption! with what trembling impatience we break the seal, and how delightful to feel the eyes moisten when we peruse the artless testimonies of pure, yet fervent affection!

Laura seated herself on a mossy bank, by the side of a rivulet, and read as follows:

'Can you pity me, best beloved of my soul? Can you forgive the injurious expressions of a mind that was agonized almost to madness? Ah! no—I do not deserve your pity—I cannot forgive *myself!* Fool that I was to admit into my heart one emotion that was not akin to rapture?—Did not Laura say "*I love you!*"—Did not her bosom palpitate on mine—and was not the remembrance of that single moment a sufficient recompence for all past and future sufferings? Ah! Laura I am not worthy of you! my soul was not all dissolved in ecstacy, it was not so absorbed in the consciousness of bliss, as to be insensible to the suggestions of anger, and the misgivings of fancy. I was weak, I was rash enough to tear myself from you; I

left you in the crisis of our fate; and I dared to arraign your truth.

'Oh! my beloved! what promise have you made? my senses seemed all bewildered that eventful evening; even now I cannot remember any thing distinctly, and I dread to reflect, for dark terrific images float on my mind. Yet what should I fear? I cannot be wretched while you love me!—no I am happy—thrice happy!—How can you promise that you will never be mine? Are we not already united by all that is sacred in sympathy? Ah! Laura, did not your heart whisper that I loved you from the first moment that we took sweet counsel together? Did you never catch the infectious tenderness of my stifled sighs—my timid glances? Did you feel nothing when I have ven-

tured to fix my eyes on yours? Have you never observed my blushes, the awkward embarrassment of my manner, when you approached me?—and, during our long evening rambles, have you never felt the throbbings of my heart when you have placed your arm within mine?------Ah! yes!—you were not insensible to such excess of love! But, alas! if ever I betrayed any emotion of countenance, any modulation of voice, that seemed like sympathy; I checked each dawning hope, and I tore myself from the fascination of your looks; for my brother had declared to me that you were his affianced wife. Yet sometimes, when I felt that *you* were the tender friend for whom I so long had sighed—that *you* alone knew how to dive into the secret recesses of my soul—to re-echo every

darling sentiment—to understand all those ineffable emotions that are too refined to be analysed, and that so few know how to appreciate:—in such moments as these, the avowal of my love has trembled on my lips; I have been tempted to dispute your affections with my brother. Ah! thought I, surely we were destined for each other!—Surely the Being who gave us hearts of sympathy did not mean that those hearts should be for ever rent asunder! Such, Laura, were the day-dreams in which I indulged myself when I gazed on your countenance, and listened to your voice. But in silence and solitude these sweet illusions vanished: I felt that it would be the blackest treachery to steal your affections from my brother; I reflected that I was poor, friendless, unknown; and I endeavoured to resign

myself with fortitude to what I deemed inevitable calamity: but fruitless were my efforts; for one look from your eyes had more influence over my soul than all the arguments of reason or the proud maxims of philosophy.

'Laura, do you remember that morning when I read to you some of Petrarch's sonnets?—Did you not observe the wild tenderness that beamed from my eyes—the contending emotions that convulsed my frame, when urged by an irresistible impulse I was hastening to disclose the fatal secret that preyed on every fibre of my heart?—Ah! was it not unfortunate that your father entered the arbour, and interrupted me?—Yet a moment longer, and I should have discovered that my brother had no claim on your

affections; that he had deceived me by a base artifice.

'Your blushes, your expressive silence would have proved to me that I was not beheld with indifference; and I should have said, "Laura, I possess no treasures but a fair fame, and a feeling heart: yet, if the most exalted admiration, the tenderest friendship, the most entire devotion of my every faculty and sentiment can compensate to you for my deficiency of rank and fortune, I will publicly avow my love; and existence will be too short for the expression of my joy and gratitude.

'Laura, these are not the mere shapings of an ardent imagination: I feel a mysterious but firm presentiment that we shall one day be united.

'From what I recollect of the last conversation, I understand that your father's pecuniary affairs are much deranged: but it is impossible that my brother can be so lost to all sense of honour, as to proceed to desperate measures. No! his threats were only intended to terrify your gentle nature, and they succeeded, alas, but too well. Oh God! was it a frightful dream?—or did you really say that you would abandon me? Can an extorted promise be binding? Can any power on earth tear from me a soul that has identified itself with mine? Ah, surely you will not drive me to desperation!—Surely you will cancel a rash vow, when you hear the sighs, the supplications of your

'EDWARD!'

CHAP. XVIII.

- - - - - Love refines
The thoughts, and heart enlarges.'

WITH what eager delight did Laura peruse this letter! She wept tears of joy over it, and dwelt enraptured on every sentence.—'Yes, he is right,' thought she; 'surely the Being who gave us hearts of sympathy will not suffer those hearts to be for ever rent asunder!'

She fixed her eyes on the rivulet, that was gliding at her feet; and experienced one of those reveries so rare and felicitous when reflection seems to

slumber, that the soul may indulge her sensations unmolested:—when we feel *what it is to exist*; and the *present* is enjoyed, without a regret for the past, or a wish for the future.

Insensible to the progress of time, Laura continued to pore on the stream, smiling and weeping alternately; when suddenly hearing the village clock strike two, she recollected that her father would be surprized at her long absence, and washing away the traces of those tears she had shed with so much delight, she quickly returned to the cottage. When she entered the parlour she perceived that her father was so much engaged in examining a great number of papers, that he scarcely noticed her approach; therefore she gladly

retired into her own chamber, and, seating herself at the open casement, wrote

TO EDWARD.

'My heart feels so much that I cannot arrange my thoughts; but I hasten to send you a letter, for I judge by my own emotions when I received yours, and by the ineffable tranquility it has diffused over my spirits, that a letter is the sweetest and most reviving cordial to one who is sick at heart.—— How can you ask me to forgive you? Do you not know that the sudden jealousies, the trembling doubts, the gentle upbraidings of love bring with themselves their own atonement, by proving to what excess the soul is imbued with tenderness? Ah! Edward, how can I be angry with *you?* Is it not

to you that I am indebted for the developement of those faculties that make me bless my existence? Before I had seen *you*, that existence had no charms for me. Regardless of the world's admiration, I had no motive to stimulate my mind; no object to awaken my soul. Society appeared to me a dreary void: I was like a stranger in a foreign land:—no one understood me—no one spoke the language of my heart, and I wandered about neglected and neglecting, opprest by the aching languor of unparticipated sensibility.

'How changed are my present emotions! and from the first moment that I felt there was one being in the world whose heart beat in unison with mine, that world became dear to me. Yes, Edward, I associate your image with

all that is grand or beautiful in nature: you are ever present to my thoughts; I meet you in all my walks; and when I read I often exclaim, "these are *his* sentiments! It is so *he* would have acted!" I no longer need a motive to stimulate my exertions. Is it not a noble ambition to endeavour to gain an empire over the heart of him we love, by the attainment of endearing graces and mental perfection? How often do I now pass whole hours with pleasure in occupations that were formerly irksome to me!—With what application do I study Italian, because it is your favourite language! How often do I draw, or play on the harp till I am quite fatigued, to render myself more worthy to be beloved: and all the time I am so employed I think of you, and am happy. My mind is every mo-

ment occupied with you! I build airy castles, and we inhabit them together. I retrace all your looks; and those heretofore unheeded words and gestures that now bring to my heart the sweet conviction of your tenderness. There was once a time when I rejoiced to witness the decline of day; but lately, I have been *too* happy to wish to forget myself; and I am vexed to fall asleep while I am thinking of you.

'Edward, is it wrong thus frankly to express what I feel? I know not!—my emotions are as new as they are delightful: but my love for you seems, instead of degrading me, to exalt my nature, and my heart was never before so attuned to benevolence and virtue. Alas! painful sacrifices are required of us; and should I have retained your

admiration and esteem, had I abandoned my father?—No, my friend!—you must not ask me to become unworthy of you. My father is torn from all his former habits, and the luxuries of life: I am his only remaining comfort; nay, I am almost necessary to his subsistence: therefore, though I were not bound by a solemn promise, the station that duty allots, and that I should chuse, is at his side. Our prospects may brighten: your brother may relent: your own exertions may restore us to independence, and then - - - - - - yes, Edward, you say truly that we are already united by sympathy, and that no earthly power can separate us! I read your letter on the banks of a little rivulet that winds through the wood, behind our cottage, and thence pursues

its narrow course through sequestered meads,

> ------ 'Yet in its secret path
> Cheers some drooping flower, or ministers
> Of its cool water to the thirsty lamb,'

till it mingles with a stream that issued from its parent source. 'Ah!' thought I, 'such will be the course of my love! For awhile my days will glide on in solitude; though small my portion of wealth, I may cheer some drooping heart, I may minister to the wants of penury, and I shall finally be united to my Edward!

'We have left Woodleigh Park, and our present abode is that neat white cottage near the village of Woodleigh, which you may remember, as we once rested ourselves there, and partook

of some strawberries and cream, prepared for us by the pretty wife of my father's steward: our servants are all discharged excepting my favourite Susan. On my father's account I regret the vast alteration in our mode of life; and I own that I could not avoid shedding tears, when I left our beautiful mansion, and those spots that were made sacred by a thousand delightful retrospections: but we still possess wherewith to suffice nature.

'This cottage is very pretty; I can still gaze upon the sea; and shrubs and flowers still bloom beneath my windows. What a long letter I have written!—and yet I have still a thousand things to tell you—but my father is calling for me, and I must hasten to

him immediately. Adieu. Edward! Adieu, my best friend!

'LAURA.'

CHAP. XIX.

——————— 'Hear, O hear me!
I can no more suppress my burning passion;
It will have way: my fate is in thy breath,
And all my enamour'd soul enslav'd adores thee.'

IN the course of the evening, Susan carried her mistress's letter to the village post-office; and every countenance seemed to sympathize in her sorrow—every tongue was busied in lamenting the misfortunes of such a beautiful kind-hearted lady as Miss Mapleton: while the poor and the infirm wept over the calamity they had individually sustained by the loss of their amiable benefactress.

Nothing material occurred at the cottage for some days. Sir Robert

continued silent and melancholy. Laura used her utmost efforts to entertain him; but began to grow rather impatient for another letter from Edward. She had hitherto confined her walks to the woods behind the cottage, where she was secure from interruption and observation: but one fine evening she was tempted to venture out, and take a ramble on the sea-shore.

The setting sun was reflected on the waves, and she continued to walk a long time, till the opposite began to be obscured by the shadows of twilight, and feeling herself fatigued, she seated herself on a large rocky fragment of the shore—listened awhile to the soothing and monotonous sound of the waves that seemed to dispose her to meditation; then took her pencil from her

pocket, and arranged the feelings of the moment into the form of a

SONNET.

Along the pebly shore I love to stray,
And pore upon the waves with stedfast eye;
Or watch the varying tints of parting day,
That shine reflected from the western sky:
And then the distant landscape I descry,
And white sails glittering in the dazzling ray;
Till flitting shadows veil the scenery,
Till all the fair perspective fades away:
Then long I linger on some rocky seat,
To listen to the surges, as they roll
In murmuring undulations at my feet;
And oft I sigh for him who won my soul,
And shed the tear to musing fancy sweet,
'A sigh—a tear—I wish not to controul.'

Just as Laura had finished the last line, she chanced to turn her head; and what was her surprize and delight to behold—Edward. 'My love! my Laura!' cried he, pressing her hand to his lips—'what a precious moment is this!—to meet you—and to meet you

alone!' He then paused, and Laura was too much entranced by the unexpected pleasure of seeing him, to observe that he had ceased speaking.

'Before I saw you,' resumed Edward, 'I felt that I had much to say to you: but now that I look at you, I seem to lose all recollection!'

'Did you receive my letter?'—asked Laura, with a diffident smile,—observing the extreme agitation of her lover.

'Ah yes!' replied he—'see here it is. I wear it on my heart—I read it night and day—I dream on it—I doat on it—and I have almost devoured it with my kisses. Ah! Laura, you know not what you have done!—Every line that you have written is imprinted

on my heart in characters of fire!—you have opened an elysium to my imagination, and after having given me a foretaste of supreme felicity, can you have the cruelty to plunge me again into all the horrors of despair? No! I come to claim you as my wife!—to rescue you from the tyranny of him whom I scorn to call my brother.—You are mine!—you are mine for ever!—and even were you at this moment standing with Colonel Somerville before the sacred altar, I would snatch you to my bosom, and claim you of my God!'

Edward had spoken with such haste, and in such an impassioned tone, that Laura felt almost alarmed; and exclaimed, in a plaintive tone, 'alas! why are you so impetuous?—I thought that our spirits had been more nearly allied!

Edward made no answer; but gazed on her with a tender and reproachful air that pierced her heart. At length he continued, in a softened, tremulous voice, 'Ah! Laura, you know not how I adore you!—And to feel that you are torn from me for ever—to leave you exposed to the base arts of Colonel Somerville—even at the moment that I feel the blessed assurance of your love,—— ah! can you wonder that my brain burns, and that my reason totters? Laura, can you sacrifice my peace, perhaps my existence, to a false prejudice? We are poor—but we may be happy! you need not quit your father. Only let me know that you are mine beyond the power of fate to separate us!—the curate is my friend—a secret marriage - - - Alas! I scarcely know what I say! - - - I am distracted—

wretched!' As he spoke he gazed on her with an imploring, desponding air, while big tears rolled down his cheeks.

Laura wept likewise, but she continued to walk hastily along, without speaking; for she feared to trust her voice. After a long pause, Edward exclaimed, 'Alas! do I indeed behold the same tender sympathizing Laura who told me that she *loved me?*—Ah no! *that* Laura was not so heroic!—she wrote with such ineffable feminine softness, that every sentence thrilled through my soul: and at a moment like this, she would have looked at me; and have soothed me with the expression of her pity!'

At the close of this sentence, Laura raised her eyes from the ground, fixed

them on his countenance, and faintly smiled. Edward felt his injustice, sighed deeply, and pressed her hand to his heart. They were now within sight of the cottage:—Laura pointing to it, exclaimed, 'tis there we dwell.

'Adieu, then Laura! adieu!' cried Edward, in a faltering voice, 'I cannot accompany you farther. I feel that in the present state of my mind, I might not behave as I would wish to do to *your* father. Alas! when shall I see you again? I have quitted my regiment without leave of absence; and I must return immediately. Ah! Laura, do not part with me in anger! pardon all the weakness I have discovered; write to me, write to me, I conjure you! —Ah! do not forget me!'

'It is impossible to forget you!' said Laura, fixing her humid eyes on his countenance, as if the more strongly to imprint it in her mind: then, disengaging the hand that he held, she almost ran till she reached the cottage; and Edward remained transfixed to the spot where she had left him, till he could scarcely discern her form, and till he fancied that he heard the door closed between himself and all that he valued upon earth.

CHAP. XX.

———'Come what come may,
Patience and time run through the roughest day.'

LAURA retired early to her own room, where she passed the night in great agitation of mind. She was as much surprized as grieved at the conduct of Edward. She had never before witnessed the tumults of passion. Her own heart was tranquil, and she was astonished that love could render any one unhappy, particularly when it was so fully participated. But that Edward was wretched she could not doubt; and she wept when she brought to remembrance his frantic gestures, and the wild eloquence of his expressive eyes.

Engrossed by this dangerous image, she rose with the sun, and wrote him the most affectionate, the most tender letter that ever was dictated by thespirit of love. But as she had early in life adopted the wise precaution of never acting in important exigencies from the hasty impression of the moment, she resolved that she would not send her letter to Edward till she was enabled to determine if the sudden impulsions of feeling were sanctioned by thedeliberations of reason. During the day she was thoughtful and melancholy: and towards evening, when she again perused her leter, it did not please her, and she tore it to pieces. She then wrote another, which shared the same fate: for she reflected that it was her duty to suppress any sentiments that might tend to weaken the mind of her lover;

and that, on the contrary, it was necessary to impress him with a full conviction of the many obstacles that impeded their union; as likewise to calm his agitated soul, by inculcating, both by precept and example, the duties of patience and resignation. This was no easy task for one who loved so much as Laura: however, after several unsuccessful efforts, she completed the following letter.

'You desired me to write to you, Edward, and I obey; but do not imagine that I am hastening to disclose to you the weaknesses and wanderings of my fond heart. No! it is necessary that one of us at least should have recourse to the language of reason.—Ah! my friend, was not that an unkind insinuation? I fear that I shall not be able to

write with all the firmness that is requisite—but *indeed*, at this moment I wish to appeal to your head, and not to your heart. I was both grieved and astonished to witness the agitation of your manner during our last interview. And had you then any sorrow so beyond endurance as to justify the excessive tumults of your mind? No! you do not feel the pangs of despised love—you do not mourn over the untimely grave of her whom your soul holds dear:—I live!—and I live only for you!—Edward, you suffer your imagination to wander unrestrained, and you become unjust. How can you fear that the artifices of your brother should ever prevail over an heart that is so strongly guarded by your image? Let me conjure you not to cherish resentment against him.

'Consider the many impediments that would have obstructed our union, even had he never crossed my path. You would have asked me of my father: but you are a younger son without fortune, and your virtues and your love—the only settlements that I should have desired—would not have compensated in the opinion of an ambitious parent for your want of riches. Edward, I could not have married you without his consent! Even if a principle of filial duty had not restrained me, I would not have intailed repentance and poverty on the man I loved! I have no independent fortune: we could scarcely have existed on yours; and indigence is a positive evil;—it surely must contract the mind and render the heart selfish: for how could we revolve any generous designs, or listen to the dis-

tresses of our fellow-creatures, when our own necessities required all our attention; and when it might even be difficult to procure our daily bread?'

'Ah! my friend, this is a gloomy picture, but it is sketched by the hand of Truth. Sometimes Fancy presents another that is painted in rainbow hues. - - - - - - We are married—we live together in a little thatched cottage, half covered with honeysuckles; and while the setting sun gilds our humble dwelling with its last rays, we sit in our rustic porch, and share our simple repast with heart-felt delight, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot."

'I love to indulge these illusions; but still I know them to be illusions, and that it is impossible to realize the

fictions of romance. Yes! my Edward, having experienced the real joys of affluence, I feel that I am not fitted for the struggles and exertions of poverty. I feel that it would cost me many a pang to behold the sufferings of humanity without having any longer some trifling consolation to administer; and that my eyes would often be moistened with bitter tears, when I encountered the imploring gaze of penury, and the hand that was extended in vain.

'You will know, my best friend, in what manner to apply these observations. At present, with my legacy, and the pittance that your brother thinks it necessary to allow us, we possess competence: and I am contented. I live in remembrance of the past, and in contemplation of the future. I am

secure in your love! we may often write to each other; we may sometimes meet: why, then, are you so unhappy?—Some unexpected good fortune may soon occur—you have several rich relations. Ah! do not abandon yourself to despair! rouse the energy of your mind, and, above all things, do not suspect that my heart can ever alter!—I could say much on the subject of a secret marriage—but I will desist, and only observe, that I wonder you did not know me too well to propose it. Whatever I dare to *do*, I dare to *avow!*—Alas! I fear that my letter may give you pain; but you will perceive that it has not been written without tears.—Do not think me unkind! do not think that my sentiments are changed!—you must not, you cannot doubt the truth and tenderness of your

'LAURA.'

CHAP. XXI.

'O anime in amor troppo infelici!
Che giova a te, cor mio, l'esser amato?
Che giova a me l'aver si caro amante?
Perche condo destino,
Ne disunisci tu, s'amor ne stringe?
E tu perche ne stringe,
Se ne parte il destin, perfido amore?'

DURING the last interview between the lovers, it happened, unfortunately, that Colonel Somerville's confidential servant was, at the same time, walking at a little distance on the beach; and, unperceived by them, had witnessed their meeting. Of course, as soon as he returned home, he hastened to communicate such important intelligence to his master. When Colonel Somerville heard it, he was almost inclined to go and execute his threatened vengeance on the person of Sir Robert:

but just at that instant some one entered, who engaged him in business, and diverted the current of his thoughts: yet the next morning, when he reflected more coolly on the subject, he was determined to stop all future interviews between Edward and Laura: for he knew that while they continued to meet, it would be impossible to tear asunder the bonds that united them; or to reduce Laura, by humiliations and persecutions, to accede to his proposals. Impressed with this conviction, he dispatched the following note to the cottage:

'Miss Mapleton is desired to have no further interviews with Mr. Somerville. Her steps will be narrowly watched, and if at any time, or in any place, she is again seen in his society, she will ever

after confine her walks within the precincts of the King's Bench, should she think it necessary to attend her father during his imprisonment for life.'

Laura received the above while she was sitting in the evening with Sir Robert. She trembled and turned pale, as she perused it; then faintly exclaiming, 'gracious God! how cruel!—what! must I *never* see him again?' she placed her hands over her eyes, and rested her head on the back of her chair, while her father took up the note, and began to read it. When he had finished it, suddenly starting from his seat, he paced up and down the room in a most violent rage; till softened by hearing the stifled sobs of Laura, he exclaimed, 'alas! my child, to what misery have I subjected you! It is indeed

but too true that I am entirely in the power of Colonel Somerville. My estate was deeply incumbered when it came into my possession. Some years since he lent me very considerable sums of money, and I became involved in a ruinous speculation: at the same time my mode of living was far too expensive for my income; and I have lately been obliged to have recourse to him to discharge for me some enormous debts; and my house, my lands, and all my property are scarcely an adequate security for the sums so borrowed. He tempted me to play with him at a very high stake, and knowing that I was already ruined, I did not care how much further I became involved:—I owe him 6,000 guineas on a gaming account.'

Laura was so much grieved at the thought of never more beholding

Edward, that she could not attend to all the particulars of this recital; but she raised her head, and languidly exclaimed, 'ah! no—it would be *too* great a sacrifice!—Do not ask me *never* to see him again!'

'Alas! Laura,' answered Sir Robert, 'I ought not to require any thing of you; yet I have received so many proofs of your affection and strength of mind, that I do not think you will now abandon me, after having endured so much, and with such fortitude. This imperious command from Colonel Somerville does not surprize me, for I feared how the affair would terminate, when, on my questioning you last night, you told me that you had been walking with his brother. But go, my love! (continued he)—go into your own room, and

compose your mind: to-morrow, perhaps, you will be better enabled to form a just decision.'

Laura complied; and went to bed. When the morrow arrived she was no longer irresolute; but told her father with affected serenity, that 'she believed it was necessary to obey Colonel Somerville's commands, and that she would write to Edward to acquaint him of the new sacrifice that was required of them.'

Day after day elapsed, and Laura had not courage to inform her lover of a determination that would make him so completely wretched. In the mean time she received a melancholy letter from him that increased her grief; and she knew not in what form of words to

send the heart-rending intelligence—'that they must meet no more.' Often did she sit and weep for hours together. At other times she would wander in the woods till late in the evening,—not, perhaps, without a latent hope that Edward might be there:—and, when she returned at night, regardless of the chill autumnal breezes, she would throw herself on a bench in front of the cottage, and strike some wild notes on her harp, or a plaintive tune that she had loved in happier days. To one of these simple melodies she adapted the following words:

'In dreams by night, in dreams by day,
Methinks I see thee still before me!
Methinks I hear the faltering voice
That whisper'd—'*Laura, I adore thee!*'
Alas! the rapid conscious blush
Too soon proclaim'd what then befel me!
My downcast looks, my trembling frame, [thee.
Told much, *much* more than *words* could tell

And art thou lost! for ever lost?—
Ah! how I wept when it was told me
That I must hear thy voice no more!
That I must never more behold thee!—

These fruitless tears will ever fall!
Ev'n Hope refuses to deceive me.—
But the blank sadness that I feel,
I will not paint!—for it would grieve thee.

Yet faithful mem'ry oft shall bring
Thy tender words and looks to cheer me:
Still on her treasur'd hoards I'll live,
And my fond soul shall hover near thee!

CHAP. XXII

———'In struggling with misfortune
Lies the true proof of virtue.'

'HAVE you written to Edward Somerville?' exclaimed Sir Robert, one morning, at breakfast.

'Alas! I have not!' replied Laura. 'I know not what to say!—

'I am under constant apprehension that he will make his appearance at the cottage,' exclaimed Sir Robert: therefore you will oblige me by sending him a letter immediately; and as I am going

to walk into the village, I can take it to the post-office for you.'

Thus urged, Laura could not refuse, but went into her own chamber, and wrote as follows:

'A terrible task is imposed on me! Edward, prepare to hear something that will rend your heart. My friend, my dear friend, I have promised - - - - can you forgive me?—I have promised—Read the inclosed note, and tell me if I could have acted otherwise!——Alas! must I *never* see you again? never more hear your voice?—No, Edward! we are united to all eternity! even death cannot separate us: for the soul can never lose her consciousness; and we may humbly trust that our spirits will hereafter be blend-

ed together—But ah! we will not take refuge in the thought of eternity; we shall be happy even in this life; and the misfortunes we have encountered will only tend to make our final union the more sweet. Edward, you will ever be as present to my soul as you are at this moment:—your image is too deeply engraven there to be effaced. If I meditate, I think only on you—if I close my eyes, you instantly appear before them with that noble yet melancholy air which first touched my heart. Judge, then, if an idea so impressed on all my soul can ever be obliterated.

'Oh! Edward, is it not cruel of your brother thus to separate us?—But in spite of all his efforts the day will come when we shall meet—never to part again. Fix your eyes, my friend, on

this bright perspective, and do not resign yourself to despair.—'Alas! do I indeed cherish the hope that I would fain impart?—I cannot bid you adieu!—I cannot possibly believe that days, months, and years are to pass away before I may see you again. I shall write to you very often. I could not exist if you were to forget me. My senses seem bewildered—my heart throbs violently—and my tears fall so fast that I cannot continue.'— — —

Laura hastily sealed this letter, and rang the bell for Susan to take it to her father: then throwing open the casement, she felt the sea breezes on her face; and they seemed to re animate her drooping soul. There is nothing more soothing to the children of affliction than to exhale their sorrows in the

open air: for air revives the languid frame, and melodizes the trembling nerves to pensive sadness; 'as the breath of Zephyrus awakes the tender vibrations of an Eolian harp.' Laura possessed the never-failing consolation of knowing that she had performed her duty, by the sacrifice she had made to her father; yet it was a sacrifice *so* painful, that it was several weeks before she could regain a tolerable degree of chearfulness.

The winter was now set in, and nothing could be more gloomy than the prospect around the cottage. There were no longer any flowers in the garden: even the holyhocks and sun-flowers were gone out of bloom; and the myrtles (that always flourish near the sea) were now matted up, to preserve them from the approaching frost.

In the wood walks, lately so gay, the trees were entirely stripped of all their 'leafy honours,' save the tall fir, the stunted holly, and the funereal yew.

The ocean was frequently dark and tempestuous: the wind howled through the casements of the cottage: and the sand was raised in thick clouds along the sea shore. Sometimes torrents of rain descended; the billows advanced beyond their boundaries, almost threatening to overwhelm the cottage; and the dark heaving ocean and lurid sky seemed blended with each other.

In moments like these, Laura would gaze around with silent admiration; filled with the sublime idea of HIM who can say to the waves, 'thither shalt thou

go, and no farther.' At other times, when the weather was more calm, but still cold and dreary, she exerted her utmost efforts to remove her father's dejection, and to call off his attention from melancholy and remorseful retrospections, thatwere increased, now that he could not take his usual walks, and that he was perpetually complaining of the long evenings.

Luckily Laura could play at chess remarkably well: her father was fond of the game, and she often suffered him to win, that he might be the more amused.

She procured newspapers, and every other publication that she thought would entertain him, from the neighbouring market-town; and though

reading aloud was somewhat painful to her, she was glad when her father employed her in that manner:—and often, when she thought it might enliven him, she would play a sprightly tune on her harp, or sing one of his favourite songs. She likewise cultivated the acquaintance of the amiable clergyman who had restored Lucy to life, because he could play picquet with Sir Robert, and entertain him with the news of the day.

Nor was Laura unmindful of the wants of the poor, at this inclement season. She had but little to bestow; yet she knew how to employ that little to the best advantage. The weather was seldom too bad to prevent her weekly excursions to the village. She continued to superintend the little school she had established; she frequently passed seve-

ral hours in making warm garments for the aged; and her delicate little white hands, that looked so beautiful on the harp, were often scorched over the fire, in preparing cordials for the sick.

By degrees the mind of Laura attained somewhat of composure. It is true, that when she was was alone, she always thought on Edward: 'Her sighs still arose with the beam of the east; her tears descended with the dews of night:' but they were not mingled with the pangs of despair:—they were calm and tender as the sighs and tears that memory pours over the tomb of a long departed friend.

Edward had written with apparent composure; and the thought that he

had conquered the impetuous tumults of his passion, contributed to tranquilize Laura: but it was chiefly the exercise of benevolence that diffused a serenity over her spirits; for there is no balm so healing to a wounded heart, as the tears that distill from the eye of gratitude.—O! if the rich and prosperous were more fully impressed with the conviction of this important truth, they might ever prepare for themselves the most precious consolation, during those hours of affliction that are inseparable from existence!

END OF VOL. I.